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GENERAL  
SIR JOHN MAXWELL







To Jacky Carver  
from his Grandfather  
1926. Lt. Maxwell

# GENERAL SIR JOHN MAXWELL

By  
SIR GEORGE ARTHUR

FOREWORD BY FIELD-MARSHAL H.R.H. THE DUKE OF  
CONNAUGHT, K.G.

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## FOREWORD

**I** MOST readily respond to the request that I should write a foreword for the Life of the late General Sir John Maxwell.

A story of (Sir) John Maxwell must be the story of a life wholly dedicated to the public service. From the morning that he joined the Black Watch until the evening when he laid down the Northern Command, his military activities were incessant, and through many years were carried out in the face of his country's opponents. Yet in the Sudan, in South Africa, and again in Egypt, he displayed qualities which go to mark the efficient administrator no less than the successful soldier. His share in the Milner mission and his chairmanship of the Lord Kitchener National Memorial Fund were of a piece with all that made happy his military career, and the good results which seldom failed to wait on his efforts were perhaps due in equal measure to ingrained shrewdness and an intense love for human nature.

Maxwell was my Chief Staff Officer for a number of years ; first when I commanded in Ireland ; then for the four and a half years when I was Inspector-General of the Forces, and subsequently for the first year of my Command when I was General Officer Commanding and High Commissioner of the Mediterranean. No work ever came amiss to a most capable Staff Officer who, moreover, had enjoyed a large experience of soldiering in many parts of the world and who kept himself closely informed as to the organization and training of armies alike in Europe and the East ; his views consequently were of the greatest



help to me in making decisions on many points connected with the effective conduct of very important and responsible duties.

Maxwell was a delightful companion with a cheerfulness which never flagged and a wit which gave no wound ; when he died I lost a dear friend in whom I had implicit confidence and whom I held in the highest esteem.

ARTHUR,  
F.M.

CLARENCE HOUSE,  
ST. JAMES'S.

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## CHAPTER I

### TEL EL KEBIR AND THE NILE

“**W**HEN as a General Officer he bade good-bye to official Cairo in 1920, there were some still to remember the high-spirited, handsome boy who had first come there flushed with the success of battle, and quickly fascinated with Egypt.” So ran the reminiscences of a writer who knew his Egypt by heart ;—and, truth to tell, John Grenfell Maxwell, despite enervating climatic conditions, despite many public cares and personal troubles, retained through fifty years of manhood many of the characteristics of a high-spirited boy.

Born in 1859, his early boyhood was spent largely in Scotland and was as healthy as it was wholly uneventful. At Cheltenham, where he was sent when still of tender age, he maintained an average in the schoolroom and playground which preserved him from any reproach but procured for him little distinction. He was noticeable—so the few who noticed him at all would say—for a rather precocious shrewdness, due perhaps to his Scotch parentage and apt to be a little baffling to his teachers, and for a muscular development which foreshadowed prowess as an amateur boxer and gave rise to a quite unfounded reputation for pugnacity. “Fighting to which he is out of measure addicted,” wrote one of his uncles about the youthful Clive, “gives his temper such a fierceness and imperiousness that he flies out on every occasion.” Nothing could be less fair than to apply this dictum to young Maxwell, whose juvenile fistic successes were achieved without the slightest animosity and were often

the prelude to a period of close "chumship" with the defeated opponents.

Although not sprung from any marked military stock, there seemed to have been no question of a choice of any profession other than that of arms, or of any regiment other than the 42nd Highlanders. From Sandhurst, where his record was no less satisfactory and scarcely more distinguished, he proceeded in 1879 to join his unit, and three years later sailed with it, incorporated in the Highland Brigade, to take part in Sir Garnet Wolseley's brief and brilliant campaign against Arabi. The Highland Brigade came under the command of Sir Archibald Alison, and a youthful subaltern glowed with pride on being asked to act as A.D.C. to the Brigadier for the night attack on Tel el Kebir <sup>1</sup> where Brigade and Brigadier played a leading, and highly successful, part. Having triumphantly entered Cairo, restored the Khedive, and made arrangements for that "occupation," pleasantly alleged to be of a temporary character but which has lasted till to-day, Wolseley returned to his post of Quartermaster-General at the War Office. The command of the troops left in Cairo fell to Alison, who retained Maxwell's personal services until his own departure to take over the Aldershot Command the following year, when the A.D.C., whose regiment formed part of the garrison, was transformed into an A.P.M. with the local rank of Staff Captain. Through 1883 Egypt generally and Cairo particularly hummed with interesting men and matters, but was marked by two tragedies on the field of battle and one in the heart of the town. Alison's successor was General Stevenson, a Guardsman as popular as he was efficient, who was determined that the British troops in Cairo should be as smart and as proud of themselves as the Household Brigade in London. There was the creation of the new Egyptian Army under Sir Evelyn Wood, a brilliant soldier but one whose pronounced military instincts induced a

<sup>1</sup> 13th September, 1882.

fine contempt for the Orientals whom he had to organize into an armed force. Lord Dufferin was summoned from Constantinople to arrange for a new system of government, but soon found the task little to his liking and—having suppressed the kurbash as a means of levying taxes, abolished the dual control and appointed Sir Edgar Vincent as financial adviser to the Khedive—he returned to his ambassadorial duties. In the early autumn Sir Evelyn Baring<sup>1</sup> arrived to set afoot the administration which was to lift himself to imperishable fame and to result in the regeneration of Egypt. On the other hand, dire disasters were to overtake General Valentine Baker between Trinitat and Tokar, and Hicks Pasha with his force was to be annihilated in the Sudan. In the summer there broke out at Damietta a fearful epidemic of cholera which, under foul sanitary conditions, found its way to Cairo and cost nearly 100,000 lives, but incidentally threw into high relief the character and courage of the British officer. At the outset most of the Egyptian doctors fled; those who remained were almost useless from fear, and more than one was forcibly dragged to his duty in the sick-wards. English officers, and not only those attached to the Egyptian Army, spent days and nights in the hospitals, ministering with skilful hands and performing the most menial duties, and always carefully carrying out the orders given by the very small staff of English doctors available, until the arrival of a batch of medical men from London restored order and some degree of confidence. The abnormal conditions bound to exist while the town was being lashed with a hideous scourge caused the police duties to be more exacting, but every minute which Maxwell could spare, or snatch, from them was devoted to the care of the sick and dying, and here perhaps was laid the foundation of the respect and affection which native troops in the years to come were to lodge in him.

Unfortunately a reverse side to praiseworthy deeds must

<sup>1</sup> Created Earl of Cromer, 1901.



be set out. There existed, and was much in vogue, an establishment in Cairo, a sort of embryo Turf Club, where baccarat-tables were presided over by an individual of doubtful origin, but undoubted astuteness, and, in his carefully-spread nets, young officers were apt to find themselves enmeshed. Within a few months a considerable slice of Maxwell's slender patrimony had found its way into the pockets of Greek financiers, khedival hangers-on and professional gamblers remarkable rather for their skill than their scruples. Money was a subject the intricacies of which Maxwell could never master, and its frequent scarcity he would rather hopelessly deplore. No amount of it would probably have left him a really rich man and a depleted banker's balance always puzzled, but seldom depressed him. But just now the pinch was to prove an excellent tonic ; so to speak, he woke up and took himself in hand ; merely to do his prescribed round and then to "sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play" ceased to have any attraction and seemed entirely unsatisfactory ; hitherto he had regarded his military duties as mere routine, but he now seems to have set himself to study the profession to which he was accredited and, perhaps all unconsciously, ambition began to stir within him and alike as a soldier and a Scotsman he realized that he was not devoid of qualities which might well, if properly applied, carry him to the front.

Late in January, 1884, there passed through Cairo the man "with a curiously detached look in his eyes" whom Maxwell always congratulated himself on having seen and spoken to, if but for a brief moment. General Gordon was on his way to Khartoum to set his hand to a wellnigh impossible task which the British Government had laid on him, and with Gordon's heroic fate the next sixteen years of John Grenfell Maxwell's life were to be closely bound up.

At a period even earlier than that of the Egyptian Expedition of 1882 trouble was brewing in the Sudan, largely owing to the machinations of Mohammed Ahmed, who declared himself to be, and was widely accepted as,

the expected Mahdi of Islam. He quickly attached to himself ever-increasing numbers of fanatical followers, and after a series of petty successes, defeated, and annihilated in October, 1883, an Egyptian army under Hicks Pasha. "When will the British Government learn that we are fighting not mere fanatics but men with a sort of thirst for death?" was the then Major Kitchener's remark to Maxwell when he heard of the tragedy which he had dreaded, if visibly, as all too likely.

As the Khedive was quite unable to master the revolted Sudanese province unaided, and as the British Government jibbed at the offer of any active assistance in this direction, it was resolved to withdraw the Egyptian garrisons and to leave the country altogether to the Sudanese.

General Gordon was sent to Khartoum early in 1884 to plan and carry out the arrangements necessary to give effect to this decision. Meanwhile, the trouble increased, the seaport of Suakin was threatened and that fine, but unfortunate, cavalry officer, Valentine Baker, who had taken service with the Khedive, when attempting with 4,999 men the relief of Tokar, was surrounded by Mahdists and his force cut to ribbons.

The Government at home was spurred by an aroused public opinion into sending a British expedition, under General Graham, to protect Suakin and relieve Tokar. Two successful, though bloody, actions were fought at El Teb and Tamai, and the redoubtable Osman Digna having been dealt a smart blow, the expedition was withdrawn.

With the early summer Gordon's position at Khartoum was fast becoming one of the utmost danger; every day rendered his isolation more complete, and increased the difficulty of effecting his rescue.

It was finally decided to send an expedition for the relief of General Gordon and to entrust the command to Lord Wolseley,<sup>1</sup> whose views as to the feasibility of an advance

<sup>1</sup> Created Baron Wolseley, October, 1882.

by the Nile had prevailed over General Stephenson's opinion in favour of the Suakin-Berber route.

Arriving in Cairo on the 9th September, Wolseley heard that a decisive reverse had been inflicted on the Mahdi's adherents at Korti by the Mudir of Dongola ; both the Mahdi's new Emir of Dongola and El Haddai, Sheikh of the revolted Shaikiyeh, being killed. But a week later occurred the tragedy of the murder of Colonel Stewart by the Sheikh of the Monasir tribe ;—Stewart had left Khartoum in a steamer for Dongola a week earlier, as the bearer of Gordon's diaries, cipher books and other valuable papers, and he was accompanied by the French and Greek Consuls and a party—numbering in all forty souls—which included several Greek merchants, a native crew and some Arab women.

The steamer had been wrecked a little below the Abu Hamed bend and the whole party on board, with four doubtful exceptions, treacherously slain. "If only," Wolseley exclaimed, in Maxwell's hearing, "Stewart had died in battle in place of being murdered like an Irish landlord by a cowardly sulking reptile such as this country and Ireland produce in large numbers ! May that murderer fall into my hands."

When the Nile Expedition was first organized, the authorities at home hugged themselves with the idea that a British force of 3,000 troops at Dongola would, *ipso facto*, scare the Mahdi away from Khartoum—a comfortable forecast which Wolseley wholly derided. He, on the other hand, foresaw a crisis at Khartoum which would necessitate the despatch of a force, to consist chiefly of Camel Corps, across the Bayuda Desert, and in the course of his progress up the Nile he arranged for a rendezvous of 9,500 troops at Korti.

Wolseley himself arrived at Korti, where he fixed his headquarters, on the 18th December, and planned to send Sir Herbert Stewart with a column largely composed of Camel Corps and Cavalry to Metemmeh, whence a dart

was to be made for Khartoum, while General Earle would advance up-river into the Monasir country and head for Abu Hamed. Sir Francis Grenfell,<sup>1</sup> who a little later replaced Sir Evelyn Wood on the lines of communication, was posted at Assuan and with Maxwell at Cairo, straining at the leash to get forward, a kindly general arranged for him to report himself to the Commander-in-Chief, who appointed him as his Camp Commandant. So far he had made his way to the front, but he was to go no farther than the advanced H.Q. Camp. Wolseley, with his usual flair for fitting a round peg into a round hole, employed the new recruit to his Staff not only in the routine duties pertaining to the control of a large camp, but also in various circumstances where good temper and a knowledge of colloquial Arabic were required. The Mudir of Dongola, a crafty Circassian who had rather "got round" Lord Wolseley, required a good deal of stimulating to keep him to his bargain in the matter of supplies and camel remounts. "The Mudir is here," Maxwell wrote to his mother, "he spends all his time in praying. If he would leave off for a little and do something else he would be more use to us. The Naval Brigade are to man Gordon steamers, dash into Khartoum, bombard Berber and generally knock sparks out of the rebels. It was a funny sight seeing the sailors start off on camels, they used the foulest and at the same time most amusing language. But although I always thought sailors could beat soldiers in the matter of strong language, the soldiers take the cake for unmentionable expressions."

On January 21st arrived a courier, who had negotiated 150 miles in three days, with Stewart's account of the battle of Abu Klea. There had been that fierce fight on January 17th which caused von Moltke to speak of the desert columns as "a band, not of soldiers but of heroes." The Dervishes attacking with fanatical fury had at one moment, and at more than one point, penetrated into the British square which they afterwards declared—so Maxwell

<sup>1</sup> Created Lord Grenfell, 1902.

subsequently heard—had been opened to let them in, in more senses than one.

But if our casualties had been heavy, and Herbert Stewart, who was the apple of Wolseley's eye, had been mortally wounded, Maxwell could still write "Gordon is as right as a trivet."

But the dark stroke which was to leave for a while a stain on British glory was about to fall. Wolseley always spoke of the 4th February as the saddest day of his life ; he was "utterly knocked out," he told those round him, that day by the intelligence that Khartoum had fallen and that Gordon's fate was uncertain ; he could only pray that his friend had been swiftly killed, for "Gordon had always regarded death as the beginning of a new life whereas, if he were alive, he might be kept for years in durance vile by a cruel monster."

Although the Commander-in-Chief at once telegraphed the news of the disaster to London, for some reason he kept it for four days a secret in camp and it was not until the 8th that Maxwell felt justified in writing home all he knew of the tragedy. The temper of the British Sovereign and of the British people was perhaps the determining factor in the immediate decision of the Government. To Wolseley's great surprise a cipher telegram reached him forthwith to the effect that the districts undisturbed must be protected from the Mahdi, that there was to be no retrograde movement and that he himself was to be supported in every possible way. This sounded very right and proper, but the Commander-in-Chief who distrusted, almost as much as he disliked, politicians, asked for a more explicit declaration of policy. Was the Mahdi's power to be destroyed ? If not, any advance from Berber would be a political rather than a sound military movement. Wolseley's military sense may have exulted in the lofty idea of avenging the man he could not save ; his common sense apprehended at once that a campaign, postponed till the cooler weather, might well be attended with more grief than glory. Nor was a summer in the Sudan with an

autumn march on Khartoum a particularly pleasing prospect for British troops ; it was one thing to hasten to the relief of a beleaguered hero whose name was one to conjure with, it was quite another to frizzle for six months in the sand, 1,700 miles away from all the amenities of life, and then perhaps to fail, by force of circumstance, to spifficate that hero's murderer.

The death of General Earle—who had unduly exposed himself in the fight at Kirbekan—and the recall of the rather dejected river column, which had been detailed to take Berber, added something to depression in camp, but for young Maxwell there was usually a silver lining for every cloud.

"A standing camp," he wrote to his sister on the 8th February, "is always the worst place to live in, for besides the grumblers there is always more chance of getting knocked up than in the desert. But the worst illness I have had has been the extraction of a back tooth by the unskilful hands of an Army surgeon who dragged me round and round a tent holding on like grim death to my molar which at last gave with a cluck. If we spend the summer here I shall be in most affluent circumstances unless I become a landed proprietor in the Sudan. I enclose a blank cheque. Fill it up and pay the Doctor's bill. For a wonder I have a little money and I do not want dear Mama to brood over the medical expenses. My money could not possibly be used in any better way, so please do this without letting the world at large know anything about it." The latter part of the letter was characteristic of an individual who proverbially "would give away his head if it were not screwed on his shoulders." Quite the reverse of extravagant in personal expenditure, money, through life, was to filter through his open fingers ; that anyone should be in want was quite sufficient reason for him to seek to relieve it, perhaps with far too little thought for to-morrow, certainly without any thought for himself. Just now there was a special tug at his heart-strings ; the mother to whom he was wholly devoted was in serious ill-

health ; the brother who had been the constant companion of his boyhood was stricken with a malady which baffled the medical science of the day ; money was not too plentiful in the family circle, and every penny of savings which a camp life could effect was for many months to find its way where it would ease rather difficult circumstances. The mother was to recover some degree of health and strength, and to live for more than a year ; the brother he would see no more, as before the spring had fully come a slender thread had snapped and Sidney Maxwell had passed on, with "Jack's" name the last words on his lips.

By the middle of March the river column had drifted down-stream back to Korti. The footsore and fine-drawn desert force had been shepherded back into that camp and Wolseley, bending his mind to the autumn campaign, had taken Maxwell with him to make inspections of possible summer camps whence, with autumn weather, the troops could be set in motion again to recapture Khartoum, "smash the Mahdi" and avenge Gordon.

"We are to spend the summer in the Sudan," Maxwell wrote on March 7th from Korti. "I have every intention of making myself as comfortable as possible, but with the thermometer standing at 120 in the shade this may seem to you no easy matter. Here is a list of things I want, please send them out as convenient and not all at once. Headquarters will be at Dongola according to present arrangements. The fall of Khartoum has changed the whole plan of campaign and necessitated the reconcentration of troops. Lord Wolseley's moral courage is greatly to be admired, for he has had shocking luck."

But if soldiers propose statesmen dispose, and thirteen long years were to elapse before the capture, the "smashing," and the vengeance were effected by Kitchener's grim perseverance and slowly swung master-strokes.

On March 24th Wolseley with his Staff and Camp Commandant embarked in whalers for his proposed summer quarters at Dongola, where he found letters from Ministers

saying that further operations on the Nile were viewed askance at home and that only Mr. Gladstone's personal weight could induce his colleagues to allow them to be carried on.

The Commander-in-Chief was hardly settled at Dongola when the War Office telegraphed that it would be more convenient for him to be in Cairo as he might have to take a view of things at Suakin. Wolseley replied that he disliked the idea of lodging in a Cairene palace while his men broiled in the desert, but Lord Hartington,<sup>1</sup> who had probably never slept out of a bed in his life, had no scruples on this score and ordered the reluctant Commander to proceed to the capital at once. But if there was to be no Cairene palace for any except the purely personal staff, Maxwell's cheerfulness was unabated.

"Lord Wolseley has started for Cairo," he wrote to his sister Florita on March 29th, "without your humble servant. I remain as I was, as Lord W. wants to travel as light and as fast as possible. The Government are evidently very anxious to have his lordship nearer at hand in case of complications with Russia. Please utilize the cheque I sent for the bills you mention ; there is nothing to spend money on here except a few additions to our not very *recherché* cuisine. We can get eggs and vegetables, and the rations are good in quality and sufficient in quantity, and with a little care we can always get good and wholesome drinking water. Soldiers are the most careless creatures in this respect and will go out of their way to avoid a filter as it gives them a little trouble ; hence I think the presence of enteric. The things you have sent me will make a wonderful difference, where you have everything you never want anything ; here there is nothing so we want everything ;—1,000 beautiful white solar umbrellas have arrived and it would make an Aldershot martinet sit up to see British soldiers in uniform under them."

But "I remain as I was" was scarcely to be fulfilled as

<sup>1</sup> Minister for War.



in a space of two months he was to enjoy his first experience of being attached to "Intelligence," he was to act as special correspondent to *The Times* and to occupy other temporary posts which seemed to be altered almost as soon as bestowed.

"There are some failures far more noble in character than any success," Maxwell could justly write. "If Lord Wolseley has failed, he has failed where no mortal man could have succeeded."

Three days after Wolseley's arrival in Cairo—on April 14th—came a message to him from the War Office that Imperial interests might necessitate an immediate withdrawal from the Sudan and that secret preparations were at once to be made for the concentration in Egypt of all troops then up the Nile. The magniloquent term "Imperial Interests" did not deceive Wolseley, or prevent him from entering a protest which was at once brushed aside. What was known as the Penjdeh incident had created a scare of war with Russia, and had been seized upon by the political party in power to enable them to scuttle out of the Sudan. The secrecy enjoined by the Government as to the withdrawal of a large force from an advanced post could only be a "*secret de polichinelle*," and Maxwell, who always kept real secrets locked in his breast, could within a few days and without indiscretion write : "The die is cast and we are to evacuate the Sudan ; it will be no easy matter getting everyone out of here at this season, but we have every confidence in the wonderful powers of organization of our Chief of the Staff,<sup>1</sup> and people at home can be sure that everything that is possible will be done. The point which now excites general comment is this, supposing all had gone well and we had entered Khartoum and relieved Gordon, and that the river column had reached Abu Hamed, it is more than doubtful whether we could have moved from either of these places and very problematical what effect these movements

<sup>1</sup> Sir Redvers Buller.

would have had on the followers of the Mahdi. The Mahdi must have enormous influence, the fact of his being able to maintain his authority in spite of reverses and want of food shows that he must impose strict observances on his followers. We hear of desertions from him, but very few come over to us ; they say that he is in great difficulties in Kordofan, that he has suffered some crushing defeats, but it is all ' they say ' and no proof. Now that we have openly given out that we are going to leave Dongola, we shall see which side the people will take, as so far they have shown no more cordiality towards us. The pure Arab, of course, is serenely unconscious of what is going on, but several of the large tribes who are compromised will no doubt migrate to more distant places."

Maxwell was right both as to the difficulties inherent in a retreat and as to Buller's—then unrivalled—capability to make it a masterly one. The final decision was to abandon Dongola—this admittedly, even on the part of the Government, a lamentable step—and fix the frontier to be guarded at Akasheh, a little above Wady Halfa. Buller's arrangements proved to be a triumph of organization ; nothing was left undone that could be done to make easy the various retrograde stages, and as each unit passed from station to station, rations and shelters were prepared with the same precision as if on a route march in England. The political measures taken were perhaps less happy. The invitation to the Mahdi, for instance, to give up his prisoners was met with the cool reply from an odious potentate that his captives were quite happy, having all become Moslems, and that he was quite indifferent as to the fate of the members of his own family who were prisoners at Halfa.

The cleaning-up and clearing-out process was bound to be lengthy, and at the end of May Maxwell was writing : " We are now busy sending away all the refugees and removing from the Sudan all Turkish and Egyptian officials. The people are in that state of excitement which excessive fright produces. Our doings, or rather mis-

doings, in Egypt are quite comical ; for the third time we have tried to suppress the *Bosphore*, an anti-English newspaper which annoys Sir E. Baring, and for the third time we eat dirt over the affair and apologize for having attempted so high-handed a stroke ; if the state of affairs were reversed and the French were in Egypt, the *Bosphore*, as an English newspaper, would have ceased to exist almost before it appeared and our Government would have said nothing."

And a few days later : " The people of Dongola are now much more friendly with the English, and see, besides the inflow of the almighty dollar, that benefits accrue under English rule. They see also abuses under which they have groaned for years swept away, and that English officials are content with their pay and do not screw the people down, whereas the Oriental official accepts a post with no great salary and gets it out of the people. The only people here seemingly content are the slaves, who have no bothers or worries, and having no money cannot have baksheesh screwed out of them. The women here are repulsive in appearance and you can ' wind ' them half a mile off, with the aromatic oil on their filthy heads."

By July the exodus from the Sudan was complete and the comforts of Cairo, or home, were within sight.

" I long for my native shores, but hungry creditors and a scanty exchequer are a drawback ; a flying visit to the scene of early triumphs at Newmarket has its attraction though we have a race-course here."

This was the complaint of a rather tired young soldier on the banks of the Nile, but circumstantially enforced economies had provided the material with which to appease, if not satisfy, the appetites alluded to ; the exchequer could look after itself and a proffered holiday was gleefully accepted.

A couple of months' leave in England, when it only required a little more ready cash to fill the cup of enjoyment to the brim, and " Conky " Maxwell, as he was now known to his intimates, was back in Egypt to take over the

duties of A.D.C. to a rather distant relative, but very close friend, Sir Francis Grenfell.

A frontier force under Grenfell had been established with Headquarters at Assuan ; Colonel Butler<sup>1</sup> was in charge of an advanced brigade at Wady Halfa, and permission had been obtained to occupy outposts at Kosheh, something under 50 miles from railhead at Akasha. The new post was wholly congenial to a young officer, who liked change and plenty of it, and on arrival at Assuan he took, as usual, a rosy view of the situation, both public and personal. "Cox reports my account as in a more or less flourishing condition," he wrote gleefully on the 9th November. "I only spent £50 in ready money when I was at home, and drew no cheque at all. The arrangement here is, I pay 10s. a day for my keep, which includes everything bar champagne. I much prefer this to being entirely 'living on the General.' I suppose the Government intend to re-occupy Dongola when they get an opportunity ; this might be in a month's time if the enemy who are now at Absarat knock their heads against our advanced posts." The "knocking of heads" was to take place at once, but nearly twelve years were still to elapse before Dongola was to be again in British hands.

Maxwell's eagerness was specially acute because since Tel el Kebir he had scarcely seen a shot fired in anger though a bellyful of fighting was awaiting him. His Staff duties in the Gordon relief expedition had precluded him from actual contact with the enemy ; now he was sure of a "scrap," and the scrap was to bring him the first of his many "mentions" and decorations. Also the Egyptian and Sudanese battalions were to fight alongside, and be tested with, British troops ; the pluck of the Sudanese and the keenness of the Egyptians—and the discipline of both—were by now beyond doubt, but as regards the latter there was still a little anxiety—an anxiety which was quickly to be banished—as to whether they would be at their best in attack.

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards General Sir William Butler.

There was to be only one fly in the ointment. "General Stephenson is coming up to take command ; I am sorry the job has not been left to Francis, but as we have now over 8,000 men at, and south of, Assuan, I suppose a real Lieut.-General is thought appropriate."<sup>1</sup>

With the last days of December a large force of Dervishes under one Osman Azrak were pressing forward towards Wady Halfa ; the small garrison composed of Cameron Highlanders and a black battalion were cut off in Kosheh Fort ; it was necessary to relieve them and it was expedient to give their assailants a lesson. Sir Frederick Stephenson, a very strict but very courtly soldier of the old school, arrived on the spot on the 19th and approved the plan of attack drawn up by Grenfell and his Brigadiers, Butler and Josceline Wodehouse.<sup>2</sup> Before dawn on the 30th the force moved out into the desert and were soon to see groups of Dervish horse, camelmen and spearmen streaming out in the *khors* and rocks to dispute the high ground with Butler's brigade, which had to pass obliquely—and without alarming the Dervish outposts—along the flank of the position held by the Arabs on the river, so as to seize a razor-backed ridge before the enemy could reach it.

The Arabs, meanwhile, who had been caught napping, suddenly found the accursed infidels all around their camp and the village of Kosheh, with the English Screw Gun Battery opening fire from a crest about 1,700 yards off. The Highlanders and 9th Sudanese, who had for some weeks been held up in the fort and had been under a daily ration of fire, scarcely waited for the order before racing for the village, which they captured at the point of the bayonet and quickly cleared.

<sup>1</sup> The same point occurred to the Government during the advance on Khartoum, but was settled by Lord Salisbury telling his colleagues that if any other than Kitchener were to command the expedition, they would have to change their Prime Minister.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Major-General Sir Josceline Wodehouse, commanding Rawal Pindi district.

Grenfell and his Staff on entering the place could see Highlanders and Sudanese on the best of terms with one another and gleefully ejecting the few Dervishes who still clung to the loopholed mud-houses. Scattered about on the sand there was all the litter of an Oriental camp, spears, swords, prayer carpets, drums, banners, leather water-bottles, pottery, bags of dollars, the Emir's correspondence, pages of the Koran and the Khalifa's prayers, and all-pervading was the familiar effluvium of dead horses and camels.

Our casualties were two officers killed and six wounded, 8 men killed and 35 wounded, while the Dervish losses in killed alone amounted to over 400, including 19 brave Emirs.

On New Year's Day, Maxwell, beaming over the first fight as to which he had been "in the know," could send word home, "Our battle came off with great *éclat* and we did the Dervishes in ; it was the prettiest field day anyone could wish to see and everything came off to plan. The Egyptian troops greatly distinguished themselves and in hand-to-hand fighting were quite first-rate. This is the place where Francis lived for five months last year and our huts are still standing." Within a few days he could have said that the "field day" had been rounded off by the capture on the river of the Arab fleet of *nuggers* laden with arms, ammunition and uniforms.

The check thus given to the invaders sufficed to prevent any further attempts for a while, but with the spring the heat, even at Assuan, was to prove a more deadly enemy than any Arab cohort, and in the summer the ravages made by sunstroke and enteric fever rendered acute the question—to which further Arab menaces and manœuvres were to furnish the answer—as to whether troops should be maintained so far south ; anyhow, the re-occupation of Dongola was for the time wholly ruled out.

Before the close of 1885 Sir Evelyn Wood had relin-

quished his command, and his succession now fell, with scarcely any mention of any other name, to Grenfell, who promptly enlisted his kinsman in the Egyptian Army and retained his services first as A.D.C. and later as Assistant Military Secretary.

## CHAPTER II

### SUAKIN. THE BATTLE OF TOSKI

WITH an interlude of peace in which only routine military duties were required, a soldier still in the flush of youth and bursting with health and spirits could taste freely of the pleasures which Cairo, alike as a garrison town and a cosmopolitan centre, could provide in plenty ; the club, the race-course, the ballroom all had attractions for him, and wherever "Jack" Maxwell went, a sunny nature, an imperturbable good-humour, a gift of shrewd repartee conspired with a constant determination to see "the best side of things" to render him a general favourite, and caused his coming, into whatever circle he made his way, to be hailed with delight. It has been laid down that, "by popularity is meant the property of being acceptable, or rather not unacceptable, to the bulk of people." Jeremy Bentham's definition does not err on the side of excess and Maxwell's claim to the "property" was undeniable.

A new interest was also at hand and one which would loom large in his latter years.

Grenfell had been sharply bitten with Egyptology and had already made a very fair collection of various objects, and he quickly infected his aide-de-camp with the notion that as the Island of Elephantine had possessed a temple and college for the priests, their burial-place was sure to be on the opposite bank to the town of Assuan, and the two agreed that the garrison of that place might very advantageously employ the spare time, which hung heavy on hand, in searching for buried antiquities



"We have been living in an atmosphere of savants," Maxwell wrote to his sister in February, 1886, "talking antiquities from dawn to dusk." And a little later, "The Grenfell temple turns out to be of the 3rd Dynasty 5,000 B.C. ; one of the most important finds of late years. We were present at Luxor at a very rich find, consisting of a tomb with eight mummies in first-rate order. There is a Professor Sayce here who reads hieroglyphics like a book, never stopping until they are finished. When one reaches this stage it is easy to account for the immense interest antiquarians take in ancient Egypt. Grenfell Pasha is really a great Egyptologist, and I am fast becoming an enthusiast, having started a small collection, though prices forbid me to do much."

Unfortunately, just when the process of excavation was in full swing, a telegram arrived from Wady Halfa, to say that reinforcements were required for the fort of Kosheh, which was being attacked by Dervishes, and Grenfell and Maxwell must lay down their spades and hurry with troops to the rescue. But at the end of 1886, at Grenfell's earnest request, the British Museum sent Doctor Budge to describe the Assuan tomb and there was to ensue a lifelong friendship between the Head of the Egyptian Department and the Sirdar, a friendship which was to be shared to the full by Maxwell and later by Kitchener.

No pacification of the Sudan could of course be looked for without the corresponding prostration of the Dervish power ; and exploiting that power in its utmost maleficence the Khalifa Abdulla el Taaishi was now in full sway and swing. The idea started by the Porte in 1885 of negotiating with the Dervishes scarcely survived Yussuf Pasha's mission in 1886, and was finally dispelled in the following year, when the Khalifa <sup>1</sup> addressed a personal

<sup>1</sup> The astuteness of the Khalifa on succeeding the Mahdi is exemplified by an incident, which took place immediately after the latter's death. Fearing that the riverain tribes, who were strong adherents

letter to Queen Victoria inviting her to come herself with her armies and fight with "the host of God," it being further intimated that if the challenge were not accepted, the same host would raze Her Majesty's dwelling "and let her taste of sorrow."

The Arab envoys charged with the letter to the Queen were the bearers of similar allocutions addressed to the Sultan of Turkey and the Khedive, who were further exhorted to adopt the Mahdi faith. It fell to Maxwell to return the letters to the fanatical and emaciated bearers with a message to the Khalifa, that Sovereign, Sultan and Khedive must alike decline to receive such overtures.

Throughout this year, the banks of the Nile were free from any threat of invasion, and the Sirdar was able himself to enjoy and allow Maxwell to enjoy a rather more than usually extended period of leave at home. In the earlier months the purlieus of Suakin were only fretted by a succession of little raids, warded off by friendly tribes ; in the autumn, two battalions having been withdrawn from the garrison, Osman Digna snatched at an opportunity, hurried to Handub, some 15 miles north of the town, ravaged the country up to the walls, and insolently declared that he was going to take it. But he had reckoned without the local tribes ; the friendly Amara defied Osman's orders to join him, broke up two of his columns, and hunted him back to Handub.

In January, 1888, Osman Digna again became obstreperous of the Mahdi, might resent the transfer of authority from themselves to the Khalifa and his Western Arabs, he summoned them to a funeral service in the great open-air mosque which held between 60,000 and 70,000 persons—all attending were to leave their weapons outside the Mosque. During the Khalifa's prolonged sermon, his bodyguard had been secretly detailed quietly to collect all the arms outside the walls so that when the service was over, the bulk of the late Mahdi's original adherents found themselves disarmed and powerless. Thus, what might have proved a serious revolution against the Khalifa's authority was frustrated.

erous and Kitchener, now Governor-General of the Eastern Sudan and Red Sea littoral (a sonorous title which only meant the command of a squalid little town and port), secured the Sirdar's leave to try and lay the truculent Arab by the heels, and incidentally liberate a number of slaves and local Arabs in bondage. The attack had nearly succeeded and Osman was nearly caught when the unhappy happened ; Kitchener was severely wounded ; his troops proved to be too few in number to make the necessary impression and had to retire on Suakin. If the *coup de main* failed in effect it anyhow succeeded in freeing 180 prisoners and inflicting 300 casualties on the Dervishes.

In July, Grenfell had again to turn his attention to the Nile, when a large force <sup>1</sup> of camelmén made a raid right up to the walls of Halfa, killing men, women and children indiscriminately on their way, while over 100 villagers were drowned in the swamping of the boats on which they had taken refuge.

A little later, another daring attack was made, this time on the Khor Musa Fort, an outpost on the Nile held by two Egyptian companies ; 500 Arabs, guided by another deserter to the Dervishes, crept up to the fort at night, drove the little garrison into the northern section of it and held them there, till Captain Machell and 160 men of the 13th Sudanese came to their rescue. The relief was effected by the simple method of drawing a cordon round the fort, entering it and bayoneting the enemy inside, while the unfortunates who leapt the wall met the same fate on reaching the ground. The exploit, valuable in itself, was welcomed as giving further proof of the grit of Sudanese and Egyptian troops.

Disturbances which might at any time prove to be simultaneous on the frontier and at Suakin were, however, beginning to make it clear that, however gallant

<sup>1</sup> The invaders had for their guide one Abu Yezid, an ex-railway official at Halfa, whom Maxwell the following year had the satisfaction of seeing shot.

the Egyptian Army, it was numerically too weak to perform a double duty.

Grenfell was sure that with a redoubtable chieftain Negumi on the warpath towards Halfa and with Osman Digna doing much as he pleased in the Eastern Sudan, an addition to the Army of three battalions of Infantry, a troop of Cavalry and a company of Mounted Infantry, were necessary ; an increase of 50 men to each existing battalion was all he could immediately obtain.

At the end of October, Grenfell with Maxwell at his side betook himself to Suakin, took stock of the situation and decided it was imperative the Arabs should be driven from their trenches. He found that Colonel Holled-Smith had arranged for a reconnaissance of the right flank of the trenches with Sudanese Mounted Infantry ; a couple of companies and the Horse Battery, the information being that the Arabs had no mounted men. The General went out as a spectator, taking Maxwell but no escort. Osman, however, had received a reinforcement of horsemen in the night who charged not only the mounted infantry but also the General and his Staff Officer. The ground was very broken and the mounted infantry horses were falling, the men being immediately speared by the Dervishes. Grenfell told Maxwell to "go slow," and the two cantered along with the Arabs on each side of them. An awkward situation was relieved when a horse in the gun team fell and the men jumped off the gun ; the Arabs, thinking they were going to be pounded, pulled up for a second. "Now we will gallop," said the General, and the pair were soon out of danger, a danger accentuated by the sure knowledge that any rider who parted with his horse would be speared alive.

"The General and I came down here on the 31st," Maxwell wrote from Suakin on the 10th November, "the Red Sea being in very good humour for our passage. The enemy are strongly entrenched and serve their guns admirably and are also very cunning ; a black head

pops up, fires off his rifle, and pops down again. This goes on all day long and with dark they begin shell-fire and come all round the forts screaming and cursing us. It is not altogether pleasant being in a small fort with 90 men and 6 shells bursting among us. On Saturday the enemy's cavalry charged right amongst us and we had to scamper off, when unfortunately four men fell off their horses and were speared. English officers take their turn and sleep in the forts where at sunset you are completely shut off from the town. The General goes back to Cairo to-morrow, but has kindly consented to my staying down here for a month or so."

After two years of "quiet" the experience of being within arm's-length of an armed adversary was exhilarating.

"Every day here is much the same," he writes in December, "a few shells whistling overhead and bullets pinging about, anybody may at any moment be hit; amongst us English officers there have already been several almost wonderful escapes. For instance, one shell burst a yard from two officers, Gordon and Beech, knocked them both over and only slightly wounded Gordon. It is a novel sensation living in this state, kept tight in a town by a few scallywags outside. We have to take turns in sleeping in the Gemaiza and Shata Forts, and then if luck is against you the night is not devoid of all danger. Of course we are absolutely out of danger where we live, unless they creep round the town and give us a volley from this side; if they did give us a well-directed one, they might bag us all. It is a great satisfaction to us all to see how extremely well the Egyptian soldier behaves under fire, some individuals being beyond all praise and must be absolutely callous. The Dervishes are making hay with all text-book principles of modern war and are with the utmost success doing the exact contrary; they have quite established themselves in trenches 800 yards from our forts armed with the best modern weapons and laugh at our attempts

to turn them out by artillery fire. Their trenches are so strong and deep that unless we place a lucky shell exactly inside we do them no harm. They have two guns which they know how to use and have better marks to aim at than we have. Moreover, their fire is concentrated, ours decentrated, we are on the defensive, they on the offensive, so they have six to four the best of it.

"Their shells drop continually in the town and occasionally hit civilians; yesterday a poor little boy had his leg shot off.

"Another black battalion and some cavalry are coming here and then we will properly go at them and turn them out; when this comes off you can expect a heavy butcher's bill, as they are sure to fight like cats in a corner. I only hope the Egyptian will stand the shock of steel to steel as well as he does bullets.

"I slept last night in Gemaiza Fort and beyond a few bullets had a very quiet night and really managed to put in quite enough of that sleep for which I am famous. I had to be about at dawn, which is not my custom in the piping times of peace.

"Suakin is very pleasant just now, not a bit hot. I never even wear a helmet, which is in itself a proof that the heat is not excessive. We have capital lawn-tennis courts and polo ground, there is also first-rate sand grouse shooting, but this latter sport is attended by a certain amount of risk, a revolver and pony being necessary; the Arab rents the other part of our property and if we are shooting the same beat he will if he can make it nasty for an unlucky sportsman. Polo, too, is varied by an occasional shell, and it adds to the hilarity of the game to see bullets dropping into the sand; however, in spite of the horrors of war and the *infra dig.* position we are in, we manage to make ourselves very happy, moreover our cuisine is exceptional and compared to us a fighting cock is a poorly-fed bird."

In 1889, the Sirdar's attentions were switched back

from the Eastern Sudan to the Nile. The Dervishes had been sharply checked at Ginniss, but they had quickly taken their courage again in their hands, as was obvious by the pregnant rumours, and occasional indications of an invasion of Egypt.

The Khalifa had his hands full with a revolt in Kordofan and a good deal of trouble with the Kababish near Dongola, but with each succeeding month the Sirdar was more and more sure that his Frontier Force must be kept on the *qui vive*, and that British troops would before long have to lend them a hand.

Early in the year, Wad el Negumi was known to have left Dongola and to be marching northwards with some 15,000 followers. So long as the Nile north of Halfa was in our hands the menace might not be thought to be very serious, as a large force marching through the desert parallel to the river must be uncomfortably exposed to attack.

To Wad el Negumi in his white-hot zeal for the cause he had at heart, no difficulty was too great, no danger prohibitive; he had been taunted by his tyrannical master; he had a profound belief in his men and an equally profound contempt for the Egyptian; behind him lay a country raided bare; in front a rich land lured on his troops, the more so as they had brought their wives and children with them. Arabs had, however, been known to make remarkable expeditions across wide stretches of country, unsupplied apparently with either water or grain, and if the Dervishes, utilizing wells unknown to us, should penetrate north, the Egyptian troops would constitute the sole barrier between barbarism and civilization.

June had, however, nearly run out before the chieftain came within range of Halfa, and here he was awaited by Wodehouse, who had quickly landed a force of 2,000 men on the left bank at Argin, three miles north of Halfa, thus forestalling Negumi's intention to sit down on the same spot. In a sharp fight which ensued the

invader suffered 900 casualties and shed 500 prisoners, while Wodehouse lost only 11 killed and 59 wounded.

Meanwhile, Grenfell was moving a considerable force up-stream and hastening, with Maxwell, to the scene of action, and as Negumi's numerical superiority began to dwindle, his troubles began to thicken. His 3,000 fighting men were beginning to be hungry, the 4,000 followers were nearing starvation, but though the Dervishes were reduced to eating their donkeys and camels, their leader scornfully declined Grenfell's suggestion that he should retire before it was too late.

Grenfell concentrated his force at Toski, a village 20 miles north of the famous Abu Simbel Temple, and arrived there himself on the 29th June ; after a personal reconnaissance on the 2nd August he decided to hold up Negumi till the British Brigade could get up from Assuan, and to make a further reconnaissance in force with the mounted troops under Kitchener, the then Adjutant-General of the Egyptian Army. But Sirdars propose and circumstances dispose. Grenfell accompanied the cavalry, and on learning that Negumi was trying to swing north-west so as to avoid contact, he determined to bring his opponent to bay and, although the fight must take place 5 miles from the river, he despatched Maxwell with orders to Wodehouse to hurry up the infantry and artillery to the spot. The Egyptian horsemen were directed to make a detour northwards to head off the enemy, and did this so effectually that Negumi, finding his path blocked, had to halt and, from amongst the rocks, seek to ward off our attack. The issue was not long in doubt ; Wodehouse and his force <sup>1</sup> arrived at full speed—for the most part breakfastless as well as breathless—and were quickly at blows with the enemy, who, when outflanked, fell back to a second ridge, losing heavily in the desperate charges they were called upon to make ; by noon the Dervishes were in

<sup>1</sup> A squadron of the 20th Hussars was the only British unit engaged in the tussle.



full retreat, leaving nearly 5,000 prisoners in our hands, while the remainder disappeared over the horizon, some to perish in the desert, some to surrender on the banks of the river. The gallant Wad el Negumi himself was killed and his small son,<sup>1</sup> who was found by his father's side, was sent down to Cairo, where it fell to Maxwell to see that he was cared for—and not a little spoilt—by good nurses in the principal hospital.

Maxwell always contended that the fight at Toski pricked the Mahdist bubble. The Dervish terror was no longer so terrifying to Egypt ; it was made clear that the Dervish capacity of offensive had been over-rated and Egypt's capacity of self-defence under-valued. Henceforward, even if at first imperceptible, the aggressive qualities of Mahdi-ism were to diminish while Egypt could regain herself, if a little optimistically, as a military power of sufficient strength to hold her own. The value of Toski was to be enhanced months later at Tokar, when the granary of the Eastern Sudan was captured and the province restored to Egyptian rule ; incidentally Toski was to provide Maxwell with a clasp, another mention in despatches, the Order of the Osmanieh, and, what was then sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, a brevet majority.

Late in October happened the great gathering of Imperial and Royal personages at Athens for the marriage of the Duke of Sparta, that " Tino " whose subsequent path was to cross Maxwell's at many points. When this *macédoine princière*—as it was described in the French Press—dispersed, a German Emperor was, for the first time in seven centuries, to appear before Constantinople, and there occurred the loudly trumpeted visit which, just a quarter of a century later, was to bear its full and unhappy fruit.

The heir to the British Throne more modestly made

<sup>1</sup> This young gentleman afterwards claimed the medal as having been present at the engagement.

his way to Egypt, and having bidden God-speed to his eldest son—then bound for India—became, together with the present King, the guest at the Ghezireh Palace of the Prince Hussein who, with the outbreak of the Great War, was to be proclaimed Sultan.

Under the skilled guidance of Sir Evelyn Baring, whose brusquerie seems to have struck the Prince almost as much as his great ability, full opportunities were afforded to study the methods of British control, which had brought the country both rest and riches.

To Grenfell, of course, was confided the military programme, and to Maxwell it fell to escort the Prince of Wales and his son over the battlefield of Tel el Kebir, and to plot the details of the great review when 1,900 British soldiers alongside 4,000 Egyptians paraded before their future sovereign. The occasion was to stimulate one of those happy thoughts which so often occurred to that most happy Prince. After the gallop past he placed himself at the head of the British troops, gave the word to advance in review order and, on arrival opposite the Khedive, raised and lowered his sword in salute while the band played the National Anthem. A *beau geste* indeed which, in the years to come, Maxwell would love to adduce as indicating a graceful deference to Egyptian dignity, no less than a perfect loyalty to Egyptian interests. And it was on Egyptian soil that a still youthful soldier first made the acquaintance of a still more youthful sailor ; the day was to come when difficulties in Egypt would be thick and opposition sometimes a little bitter, and when a soldier, now in High Command, would receive unswerving support and words of kindly approval from a sailor king.

For the next twelve months the Sirdar sought to press on the Home Government the desirability of recovering Tokar and thereby doing much to tranquillize the Sudan ; but the Secretaries of State for War and Foreign Affairs preferred to point to the peaceful state of affairs on the Wady Halfa frontier and forbid any activities round

Suakin. But gentle persistence—Grenfell's gentleness was proverbially of a piece with his military perseverance—prevailed, and early in 1891 he received permission to push the enemy out of Handub and Tamai and to retake Tokar where Osman Digna with a large force was brutally dominating the tribes. The moment was opportune as Osman had left for the Handub country, and Grenfell obtained leave from the Khedive, with whom he was inspecting the frontier force, and hurried with Maxwell to Cairo. Colonel Holled-Smith was then in command at Suakin and had done his duty so remarkably well that the Sirdar, reluctant to interfere with his command, attached to him Colonel Settle and Major Wingate, and only arrived himself, with a reserve battalion, on the 23rd of February, three days after the action at Afafit had been fought. Holled-Smith, warned at the last moment by Wingate of the proximity of a horde of Dervishes under Osman himself, had acted up to his reputation and inflicted a severe defeat on a truculent enemy; the Dervish loss had been very heavy, Afafit had been occupied, all the inhabitants coming out to sue for the *Aman* (pardon), and Grenfell could instruct Maxwell to draft proclamations announcing the re-occupation of the country.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ADVANCE BEGUN

IN 1892 occurred two events which went to shape, and to steady, the life of an officer still in early manhood who by nature was disposed to take things lightly, but whom circumstance would compel to treat them seriously. The reversion of the Sirdarship fell to Kitchener, on whose unswerving support Maxwell could thenceforward rely, and he himself, after some slight parental opposition, secured the hand of Miss Louise Bonyngé, the daughter of a worthy, wealthy and worldly-wise Irish gentleman who after long residence in America had become domiciled in England.

A wife's fortune, which was considerable, her accomplishments which were many, her love of hospitality which was unlimited, and her deep-seated liking for Egypt and all things Egyptian, were to contribute largely to the social side of Maxwell's life ; if into the arena of her husband's military duties the wife seldom intruded, she was his wholly sympathetic partner alike in success and reverse ; his letters to her—and no stress of work ever interfered with their steady flow—exhibit a tenderness, a depth of affection, and an anxious solicitude for the welfare of wife and child <sup>1</sup> with which the more casual of his acquaintance might scarcely have credited him. Unfortunately the wife was more fluent in the spoken than in the written word ; she never seemed quite to realize the void which is inflicted on the official

<sup>1</sup> The fruit of the union was a daughter born in 1893 who was appropriately named Philæ.

occupying his business far from home when the mail-bag fails to disgorge the letter on which he had surely counted ; yet only the gentlest implication of reproach ever found its way into his own letters which, even under the most forbidding conditions, exuded good humour, were never lacking in descriptive matter or in information discreetly conveyed, and betrayed a constant desire to be kept abreast of happenings at home.

As regards his immediate military future the die was at once cast ; the new Sirdar asked, or rather directed, that Maxwell should carry on as Assistant Military Secretary, and it is not amiss to turn aside for a word as to the Army with which during fourteen long years he was associated and constantly employed.

The majority of the troops consisted necessarily of the Egyptian fellahin, a material which had been tested and found wanting. Whether in the two Expeditions sent in 1875 and 1876 against Abyssinia ; or under Arabi in 1882 at Tel el Kebir ; or in 1883 when 8,000 under Hicks Pasha were cut down to the last man by the Mahdi's Sudanese ; or at El Tebin the following year with Valentine Baker Pasha as their commander—the fellahin soldiers had shown some very unsoldierly qualities. “The Egyptian Army is disbanded,” ran the laconic British Order after Arabi's surrender in 1882 ; it was a delicate allusion to troops who had already disbanded themselves.

But if the old Egyptian Army could by no stretch of courtesy have been called an army of soldiers, much excuse could be made for the men in its ranks. Unwilling conscripts, they had been dragged from their villages, herded together under incompetent officers, and treated like beasts. Half starved, packed into filthy and insanitary barracks, robbed even of their poor pittance of pay, kicked and abused by their superiors, they abhorred military service in general and service in the Sudan in particular, from which, indeed, few returned to tell their tale. Small wonder that to avoid conscrip-

tion they would cut off their fingers or more often sacrifice an ophthalmic eye, and that at first they firmly believed the new army would repeat the hateful régime familiar to them.

But when they found that, instead of being bullied and buffeted, they were treated by their English officers not only humanely but with consideration for individual feelings, a change quickly came over them. When they realized that they were looked after when sick, were given their pay regularly, were decently dressed, and above all, were allowed leave at regular intervals to visit their families, their self-respect began to revive. They assumed the correct military swagger, took every opportunity of showing themselves off, and actually began to enlist their relations when, with money chinking in their pockets, they returned to their native villages. Gradually the idea of their dignity spread, and with it the regard for discipline. They enjoyed their drill, like a new toy, and even took to drilling each other out of parade hours.

The new treatment, however happy, could not in itself suffice to convert a peace-loving peasant into a fighting man ; but the British officers soon saw encouraging signs that under new conditions the new army would show an entirely new spirit. In the Nile Expedition of 1884-5 a few battalions were quite useful on the lines of communication, and in the engagements which followed after our retirement from the Sudan, the Egyptian troops acquitted themselves with increasing credit. But in the ten years of fitful frontier warfare the fighting, such as it was, fell to the black rather than to the yellow battalions. The native officers were fairly intelligent and quick to pick up the rudiments of soldiering, but their mentality was a perpetual puzzle to their British comrades. Maxwell would say that the Egyptian officer was always anxious to please his superiors and quite willing to let 2 and 2 make 5 or  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , but that the ordinary laws of logic were entirely strange to him.

The miniature army the Sirdar would now seek to weld

into a first-class fighting machine consisted of fourteen battalions, of which the first eight were composed of Egyptians and fellahin and the other six of Sudanese blacks. When the hour struck for the advance, three extra battalions were forthcoming—creatures of Kitchener's forethought in sending men to the reserve before their due time. The first four Egyptian battalions were officered by British as well as by Egyptians, but the last four were commanded entirely by native officers ; no Egyptian, however, could rise beyond the rank of *kaimakan* (Lieutenant-Colonel) in the command of the troops, and the very few natives who held higher rank enjoyed administrative appointments. There was a sharp contrast between the well-built, healthy patient fellah, with his infinite capacity for labour, and the long, narrow, excitable black, a keen fighter by instinct, though a bad shot—an unruly but lovable child, gallant to the end and quite blindly devoted to his British officers. The black battalions had each a complement of six or seven carefully selected British officers, the remaining officers being mostly black ; they were well commanded and trained, and the experience of battle wholly belied any anxiety as to whether in their excitement they would be steady enough to obey orders. No Engineers could at any time figure in the Army List, being considered too expensive ; the three batteries of Artillery and the four smart squadrons of Cavalry, the latter well mounted on Syrian Arab horses, were also Egyptian ; some doubts were at first expressed how far the horsemen would be individually reliable, and the Dervish would refer to them scornfully as “ a gift from God.” But, with actual fighting, the value of the “ gift ” was quickly established, and the Dervish who had mocked at his mounted opponent found it advisable to move as quickly as possible out of his way. The British Staff of the Army was very small but very good. The British officers, with a sprinkling of N.C.O.'s, numbered barely sixty, but picked with scrupulous care they formed a highly efficient little body of thoroughly professional soldiers in closest

touch with their men and wholly devoted to their work.

Except for occasional Dervish raids, which never failed to flutter the natives, there was no occurrence of any sort of importance up the Nile during the first four years of Kitchener's Sirdarieh. On the Suakin side also things were fairly quiet, and Osman Digna, after one or two jerky attempts to attack posts on the Suakin-Berber road—and otherwise to make himself a nuisance—retired in 1893 to the Atbara.

But day in, day out the Sirdar was bent to train, repair and fit out—the last with the utmost economy—the Army for the mission which in time, even if not in his time, it would surely be called on to fulfil. Gordon's blood called aloud for vengeance, and a people enslaved in dark misery were mutely pleading for light and liberty.

The Khalifa was known to be preparing in his own way for a trial of strength ; the information as to his methods which trickled through from Omdurman was confirmed in 1895 by Slatin, whose escape from the monster's clutches was cleverly engineered by Wingate. After the sharp defeat of the Dervishes at the hands of the Italians in 1893, it was clear that the Khalifa made up his mind that he must look for a great combined attack from east and north ; he set himself to store grain and arms at Omdurman ; he convoked his warriors, ordered a huge wall to be built round the city, and then took a holiday, waxed literally fat, and for a while exchanged brutality for debauchery.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE ADVANCE TO KHARTOUM

IN June, 1895, the Liberal Party was defeated by a snap vote in the House of Commons, and Lord Salisbury's Ministry came into office. The Tory leaders who had been open-mouthed to condemn Mr. Gladstone for his neglect to relieve Gordon, but had condoned our not too dignified retreat from Dongola, now began to hint at an eventual return up the Nile. But for a while this consideration hung fire, as the question arose as to whether a large sum of money should be devoted to the Assuan Dam *in esse* or to the recovery of the Sudan *in posse*; the Cabinet plumped for the former and Lord Cromer was told that there was no immediate prospect of the Government consenting to the despatch of an expedition to the Sudan. Circumstances, however, alter cases, and when on March 1st, 1896, the news was flashed home of Italy's defeat at Adua at the hands of the Abyssinians, the Cabinet rather feverishly decided not on a "demonstration in force"—a move originally suggested to help Italy in Eritrea—but on an immediate and genuine advance to recover the Dongola province. Reuter's telegram in *The Times* newspaper of the 18th March—dated from Cairo but acquired from Downing Street—came as a bolt from the blue, and an official telegram drew the Sirdar from his own bedroom to Lord Cromer's at three o'clock in the morning. Together they proceeded to take the necessary measures for the mobilization of the Army, working at high pressure for some hours, when the bright idea occurred to one of them that they had not observed the formality of informing

the Khedive. Happily, however, His Highness was not an early riser and el-Lurd <sup>1</sup> on arrival at the Palace was not belated in announcing that the khedival troops were about to take the field.

Many men suggested many ways to Omdurman and both professional soldiers and amateur strategists were vocal on the point ; strategy for the recovery of the Sudan was largely governed by the Home Government's insistence on occupying the Dongola province—where lodged the main Dervish garrison—but before definite instructions to this effect had reached the Sirdar he had carefully worked out his calculations for arriving there and beyond. The question of transport was, and was to be, the crux ; the answer would lie in the best method of supplying and, if necessary, reinforcing an army of 15,000 men along one narrow rocky valley, and on one bank of the river only. A stream of men and material could reach Halfa by river from Shellal, to which point the railway ran, with a gap between Luxor and Assuan, but beyond Halfa the only means of land transport was a stretch of 33 miles of antiquated railway line to Sarras, which was remembered as the railhead in 1884. The engines were few, the rails were out of repair, and there was no money to renew them; There was no railway corps, everything had to be improvised. A good number of rails had to be dragged out of mud-huts,<sup>2</sup> others which had been lying about in sand and sun were picked up, straightened out and relaid by a scratch crowd of Sudanese, Dervish prisoners and Egyptians ; instructive classes were started and found willing and ever eager pupils ; a brand-new locomotive was rapturously greeted, and fair fell the day when the railway overhauled the strings of camels plodding back-

<sup>1</sup> Lord Cromer was always so called by the natives.

<sup>2</sup> One rail had a gruesome story, having been used by the Dervishes as a gallows.

wards and forwards along the bank between Halfa and Akasha. Such was the preface to the campaign <sup>1</sup> in which Maxwell was to plant his feet firmly alike in administration and command.

The first start was made on March 16th when a small column of mixed troops under General Hector MacDonald moved off from Wady Halfa with orders to seize Akasha, 75 miles south of Halfa, which for some years had been the enemy's main advanced post. No opposition was met with on the road, and while a strong entrenched camp was being founded, the rest of the Egyptian Army was hurried up to the new advanced base for further movements while the North Staffords were detailed to act as garrison at Wady Halfa.

Through a hot April and a hotter May went on the weary work of laying communications, only relieved by one little cavalry brush. While 3,000 Dervishes were lying in wait at Firket, 15 miles from Akasha, Kitchener was anxious to deal with them quickly and thoroughly, and had in his hand for the purpose two batteries of F.A., one battery of H.A. and one battery of Maxims ; seven squadrons of Egyptian Cavalry and eight companies of Camel Corps—under Major Burn-Murdoch—and a Division of Infantry under Colonel Hunter, whose three Brigadiers were Major Lewis, Major Maxwell and Major Macdonald. The 1st Brigade consisted of the 3rd and 4th Egyptian and the 10th Sudanese Battalions ; the 2nd was wholly Sudanese ; and to Maxwell—who still retained the post of A.S.M.—was assigned the 3rd Brigade, made up of the 2nd, 7th and 8th Egyptian Battalions. Having concentrated his troops at Akasha, Kitchener gave Burn-Murdoch one of Maxwell's battalions and told him to make a wide sweep and put in his appearance on the south of the village ; he himself led the three brigades out in the afternoon, and after a fairly brief but very bumpy night march, arrived at the defile between Firket Mountain and

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Winston Churchill's *River War* happily supplies the place of a non-existent official record.

the river just before the dawn. The Sirdar was for the first time to command a large body of troops in action, and, in a minor degree, Maxwell was to have the same experience ; a highly-trained Staff Officer was to make his *début* as a leader of men, with whose merits—or the reverse—he had, however, taken care to acquaint himself thoroughly and with whom he had successfully sought to ingratiate himself.

The force formed up, Lewis's brigade next the river, Macdonald's on its left, Maxwell's in support. Much depended on the accuracy of Burn-Murdoch's timing, but he turned up at the right moment and at just the right spot, and slipped down towards the river south of the village to cut off the enemy. The three brigades, undetected by the Dervish outposts, deployed from the narrow defile unmolested and bore swiftly down on the dim village from the north and north-east.

Firket village was but about half a mile distant from the river and the Dervishes, completely surprised, streamed out of it and ran to their posts. Macdonald moved to the left to get touch with Burn-Murdoch and complete the hemming-in circle, and Maxwell hurried up into line with Lewis to fill the gap. The whole three then opened fire, which was quickly replied to by Dervishes from some low rocks just north of the village until they were immolated by the advancing troops ; their comrades on the east side taken in front by Burn-Murdoch and in flank by Maxwell and Macdonald tried to regain their houses, but few survived the independent volleys poured on them as they crossed the open grounds ; the houses were more easily taken than even the outlying forts, and 800 dead and 500 wounded were picked up. Our own losses amounted to one British officer killed, and twenty men killed and wounded. Among the slain were several Emirs, including their commander, but Slatin Pasha was unable to find Osman Azrak among them ; this worthy was beginning to emulate the notoriety of Osman Digna, and as, like his model, he took very good

care of his skin, he fled as soon as the fight began, swimming across the river with a box of treasure on his head.

Kitchener with a well-placed blow had badly bruised his enemy, but the moral effect of the fight was even more valuable. The Egyptian troops had won hands down ; they had justified the confidence of their officers and had acquired entire confidence in themselves. Moreover, the news of the Dervish set-back echoing through the Sudan was largely detrimental to Dervish prestige, and must have knocked some nails into the coffin of the Khalifa's aspirations.

Two days after the fight at Firket the force moved upstream and an advanced post was established at Suarda. Then, for a while, everything seemed to go awry and, as so often seems to happen in war, the very elements apparently conspired to impede or defeat the Sirdar's plans.

For the advance to Dongola, land, as well as water, transport was necessary and very laboriously did the railway push its way up to the advanced base at Kosheh. Faster than the railway the cholera worked its way up and, reaching the camp at Kosheh in mid-July, raged for nearly a fortnight and took toll of 19 British officers and 260 native officers and men besides a number of camp followers.

Then ensued a forty days' strike of the north winds which had not within living memory failed to blow at this season and which had been relied on to bring up supply boats from Halfa. Still worse, they had for their substitutes a succession of scorching blasts from the south which forbade the boats, which had only sail-power to help them, to make any headway. On the 23rd August, Macdonald, under a sudden northerly breeze, set out for a 20-mile desert march to Absaret, when the wind suddenly

fell and a white heat so affected the troops that many fell exhausted, some were stricken with apoplexy, and the brigade tottered into camp in a state approaching collapse. Lewis's brigade suffered no less between Kosheh and Saadin Fanti with fiery blasts of south wind alternating with whirlwinds of sand and two tempests of rain. So violent just now were the rain-storms that floods and torrents washed away 12 miles of railway and the work of weeks was destroyed in a few hours. It was a question whether the damage could be made good or whether the army must be moved back, but with toil and sweat—when no one toiled or sweated more than the Sirdar himself—the line was repaired in a week and by the 20th September the whole force of four brigades, eight squadrons, six companies of Camel Corps, four batteries of artillery with the 1st North Staffords in reserve, were concentrated at Dulgo. Here the spirits of mischief, with devilish precision, were to play their worst trick on the following day.

The force to attack Dongola was supported by a flotilla of three armed steamers, four old gunboats and one brand-new one, the *Zafir*, on which the Sirdar would embark and which was to play the leading part in reducing the Dervish forts on the river. She had been built with amazing rapidity in London, taken to pieces for her journey and put together again ; with the Sirdar and his Staff and the Flotilla Commander on board she put off proudly from the shore, but hardly had she gone 20 yards into the stream when a loud explosion announced that her low-pressure cylinder had burst beyond repair. For once Kitchener's composure deserted him, and long after he told Maxwell that of all the disappointments in his life, this was perhaps the most acute. He ordered the *Zafir's* guns to be transferred to the other boats and then disappeared into his cabin ; but he quickly reasserted himself and determined that the expedition, though bereft of a powerful engine of war, must proceed at once. A week later the Fort of Kerma, the strongly held forward position

of the Dervishes on the east side of the river, was within striking distance. Before dawn on the 29th a move was made to attack Kerma, but the blow fell in the air as the army had crossed the river in boats and retired six miles to Hafir.

The capture of Dongola was not to prove a very difficult matter ; Bishara, the Emir in command, had tried to put his province in a state of defence, but his guns were few and his followers not too sturdy. Preceded by the gunboats, our infantry came into action along the shore with their yelling opponents on the opposite bank at Hafir ; the black riflemen gave rather ineffective support from bank and palm-tops to the Dervish spearmen, and the North Staffords on board the gunboats dosed the trenches with bullets. Commander Colville,<sup>1</sup> commanding the gunboat flotilla, now attempted to run the gauntlet of the batteries on shore, by steaming full speed ahead with his three boats ; he was badly wounded when a salvo from a sunken Dervish battery nearly sank the gunboat in which he was making this bold dash, and he was obliged to turn back. Later on in the afternoon, the manœuvre was repeated by Lieutenant Beatty,<sup>2</sup> who gave the battery a wide berth and got through, a manœuvre to lay the foundation-stone of the fame which was to be crowned twenty years later in the World War. The Emir Bishara was badly wounded, and though some of his men stuck pluckily to their trenches, his Dervishes, in the night, bolted back to Dongola ; thus the ruse succeeded, and Kitchener the next morning was able to cross the Nile in the boats Bishara had left behind him, while Beatty with his gunboats peppered the town and entrenchments of Dongola. With nightfall of the 22nd touch was regained with the enemy, and before noon the next day the Bagara horsemen had made a few futile charges, the Dervish footmen had drawn sullenly off, and at a very low price in casualties Dongola was once more in British

<sup>1</sup> Later Admiral the Hon. Sir Cecil Colville.

<sup>2</sup> Created Earl Beatty, 1919.

hands. The Dervishes were hunted up to the base of the Fourth Cataract and to the edge of the Bayuda desert, and then the "Cease Fire" was sounded for a twelvemonth.



## CHAPTER V

### THE DESERT RAILWAY

SO far Maxwell had led his brigade effectively to order, kept his men as fit and as contented as circumstances would allow ; the brigade was now to be broken up, and the Brigadier to be detailed for special service.

With Dongola secured, the Sirdar repaired to England, and having received sanction for a further advance and instructions to proceed quickly, hurried back to Egypt to discuss, largely and confidentially, with Maxwell, and determine his route. The strategic point, of course, was Berber, but was it to be approached by river, or across the desert from Suakin, or down the Atbara from Kassala ; or should the march be made from Korti to Metemmeh—Wolseley's pathway in 1884-5—or should a railway be thrown across the desert either from Korosko or Halfa to Abu Hamed ? After revolving slowly and carefully in his mind the alternative paths, Kitchener—in the teeth of expert opinion, both military and mechanical—came to the bold decision to lay a railway line from Wady Halfa to Abu Hamed and make that the line of advance. The task of construction was entrusted to Lieutenant Girouard, R.E.,<sup>1</sup> who had only recently joined the Egyptian Army but had done three years' practical work on the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Sirdar was sure that all the calculations and estimates for a work bristling with difficulties as well as its actual conduct would be sound as well as safe in Girouard's hands, and that he would

<sup>1</sup> Later Sir Percy Girouard, K.C.M.G.

labour successfully to lay the line which was to bring him a full award of notability. The Sirdar was ready also to match another man with an opportunity ; he would detach Maxwell from purely military routine, invest him with the rather nebulous title of Governor of Nubia, and, fixing his headquarters at Wady Halfa, would get him to deal with the human side of a job for which speed was only less necessary than thoroughness. The post was one for which Maxwell knew himself to be wholly qualified and he accepted it with evident relish. He could, and did, set himself to hurry things on without the "hustling" which so often defeats its own ends. He would hasten matters at issue without "hunting" the men, black or white, engaged in them. He was an adept at smoothing away difficulty, and turning aside with a laugh what, with more touchy persons, might constitute an offence. Moreover, as he was one of those soldiers who uncomplainingly "go without" when things are unobtainable but never neglect to secure anything at hand that can conduce to comfort, he would be certain, up to the margin of circumstance, to "do himself" well ; and, not least, he would be able to enjoy for a couple of months the society of his wife, of which, in the five years of married life, he had so far been largely deprived.

The new railway line was appropriately started on New Year's Day, 1897. It was truly a daring enterprise, as the route selected was waterless and its course largely guesswork ; the distance from Halfa to Abu Hamed was 230 miles, and a survey of about 10 miles ahead of construction was all that was possible.

Imagination may boggle at the scene which railhead was for some months to present. A tropical sun, constant dust and din and not infrequent sand storms, a babel of voices, a chaos of trucks, locomotives and stores, the arrivals of the "material" trains carrying rails, sleepers, newspapers, letters, eatables and drinkables for the 2,000 artificers and platelayers, the ceaseless duty of having

to supply the working parties—and their escort—with rails and sleepers for their labour, and food and drink for their sustenance, a multitude of minor difficulties which had to be “got over,” a thousand and one questions which had to be answered—there must have been moments when even Maxwell’s imperviousness to heat and monumental good-humour were tested as if by fire. Yet after four months of these conditions, tempered at first by a brief visit from his wife, he only murmured at having “heaps and heaps of work to do, and every day it seems to get more and more”; his sergeant, he thought, had had a drinking bout and was nearly two months behind in his work, and his supply of cigarettes was somewhat scanty. He hoped, perhaps a little fondly, that Mrs. Maxwell had found “lots of money at Cox’s,” and he already opined that we should soon have trouble with the Boers; but he was cheerful as to the line being now 30 miles out, leaving 185 miles still to do, and “once we start it will fly along at the rate of at least two miles a day.” A brief visit to Assuan in May found a not very delectable place, cumbered with masses of railway material, intensely hot, a dust storm culminating in rain, with the inevitable result of poles being blown away, railway banks washed out and generally the devil to pay, *but* Ali Bey Haidar had given him an extraordinarily good dinner with everything very well done *and* he hoped that on his return to Halfa his ice machine would be in working order.

Early in June, when alluding to the cavalry scrap at Salamat and exulting in an Egyptian subaltern having charged without orders, he could hope that by the end of the month the railway would be 100 miles out, but it was “hot enough to hatch an egg if it had been left in the sand, and much too hot to play about with red-hot pieces of iron.” Then came the word that the main difficulty of the journey had been suddenly brushed away. “We have found water 85 miles out. If it turns out to be plentiful,

our troubles will fade. A great piece of luck, quite Kitcheneraic.” <sup>1</sup>

By July 20th, 120 miles of railway had been laid, and a halt was called for the river base on the other side of the desert to be made secure. Maxwell appears to have attempted just then a miniature raid. “ My little scheme,” he wrote on the 25th, “ did not come off as well as I hoped it would. The Arabs I sent went as far as Abu Hamed, but finding there were too many men there for them to tackle, they very wisely did not attempt to do what they were not sure of, so they just bagged 30 Dervishes' camels and returned. I hear Stuart Wortley <sup>2</sup> is coming out. Kitchener will find him rather an armful, as he is not the sort that will be content with a back seat and will offer his opinion very openly on everything.”

Meanwhile, if little had been seen of the enemy, and if the capture of Dongola had caused a panic at Omdurman, the Khalifa was still known to entertain no doubt of the result, but was going to leave no stone unturned to secure it. The Emirs and Sheikhs of outlying provinces, who had been accustomed cheerfully to raid unarmed people and seize their supplies, were now ordered to bring in their men to Headquarters, as the decisive battle would be fought close to the capital, where, according to a vision, the bones of thousands of infidels would whiten the plain. What was left of the Dongola force was told off to hold Metemmeh with the Jaalin inhabitants, while Osman Azrak occupied Abu Klea wells ; in the north-east only small posts were left along the Atbara, Abu Hamed being garrisoned with a few hundred men, and Berber itself weakly held. The Emir Mahmud and his Army of the

<sup>1</sup> Kitchener had divided the estimated distance into three sections, A.C., C.D. and D.B. ; wells were sunk at C and D, and the precious fluid, which hitherto had been looked for in vain, was found there ; curiously enough, though looked for in eight other places, water has never been found anywhere else.

<sup>2</sup> Later Major-General the Hon. E. Stuart Wortley.

West were summoned from Kordofan and Darfur to join the main Dervish force at Omdurman, but after the encounter at Salamat, Mahmud was told to quarter his force on the disaffected Jaalin at Metemmeh, to whom the prospect of this visitation was so disagreeable that the Sheikh hurriedly offered submission to the Sirdar; unhappily before the rifles and ammunition for which he pleaded could reach him, his people had been attacked and very nearly wiped out by Mahmud.

On July 29th, Sir Archibald Hunter set out from Merawi, and by dawn on August 7th his three black battalions were on the plateau overlooking Abu Hamed from the north and moving down on the Dervish entrenchments; the enemy held their fire until the last moment and then discharged two volleys, mainly at the 10th Sudanese, two British officers with a dozen of their men being shot dead. The Sudanese battalions moved down without further difficulty on the village, and in less than an hour Hunter could telegraph to Kitchener at Merawi that Abu Hamed was ours.

The railway was then pushed on again and the gunboats and other steamboats ascended the Fourth Cataract, the last boat of the flotilla reaching Abu Hamed on August 29th. Two days earlier Hunter heard that the Dervishes were scuttling away from Berber, and sent out a reconnaissance to spread stories of an immense army on the march; his emissaries had little trouble in inducing any lingerers to take flight, and on August 31st the occupation of Berber marked a definite stage in the campaign. That day Maxwell was writing to his wife: "I have just come back from Korosko, where I had to go to see off a large camel convoy to Abu Hamed. Just before leaving I received a letter from you in which you ask me not to get killed. I promise you I won't if I can help it. The loss we had at Abu Hamed was quite exceptional, the tenth Battn. walked right up to a concealed shelter trench and when quite close received one well-directed volley which did all the damage. The fight

only lasted an hour, so except for the deplorable deaths of Sidney and FitzClarence <sup>1</sup> was not of much account in the way of a fight. We will have one big fight either at Metemmeh or Omdurman, I hope the former, as there are fewer houses to tackle. . . . Prince Francis of Teck <sup>2</sup> has gone on to join Kitchener's Staff. He seems a good sort and full of fun. Lady Grenfell writes to me that they are taking Harold Grenfell as Aide-de-Camp. I hear the General has stipulated that he is to command if any British force comes up the Nile. I doubt if we will be allowed to go beyond Berber this year, but in the Sudan it is the unexpected which is always happening. All this uncertainty is a great bore, but the Government will not say Yes or No and only shake their heads and hope that something will turn up."

The main strategic point of the Sudan had indeed dropped into the Sirdar's mouth like a ripe plum ; but could he avail himself of the unexpected prize and occupy—and supply—Berber in force ? It seemed scarcely safe to send only a few troops there as Mahmud with 12,000 men was almost within striking distance of Metemmeh and Osman Digna had another couple of thousand at Adarama, while the ex-garrison of Berber was still hovering hard by the place itself. But nothing venture, nothing have, and perhaps the question of morale determined the Sirdar's mind. On September 5th Hunter with a flying column reached Berber and hoisted the Egyptian flag, and by the middle of October the garrison had been substantially increased and a small advance post had been established at the mouth of the Atbara. The news that the British were in Berber struck a chill into the Khalifa, who, convinced that an attack on his stronghold was imminent—although the railway had not yet reached Abu Hamed—mustered his men at Omdurman and forbade Mahmud to advance. The Suakin side soon became quite tranquil

<sup>1</sup> Both officers, who had made their mark in the E.A.

<sup>2</sup> Prince Francis of Teck, an officer in the Royal Dragoons, brother to Queen Mary, had just been appointed to the E.A.

and the Suakin-Berber road was reopened to Europeans for the first time since Hicks' ill-starred expedition of 1883.

Maxwell in a letter to his wife on the 14th September drew a little sketch of the situation, "that you may know exactly how we stand. We have taken Berber and our boats have gone as far as where the Atbara joins the Nile. Here we captured 20 Dervish boats full of stores. The Dervishes have a large force at Metemmeh on both sides of the river, but are in great funk of our gunboats. The whole question now is one of politics, whether England means to take the risk of allowing us to go on alone, if she means to send out an expedition to assist us, or if we are to wait for a year until the next Nile and then finish the thing off. I must say I hope they will let us, at least have a crack at Metemmeh, and then if needs be sit down, but there are very many reasons why we should go on now; we have been at high pressure for over a year and cannot keep on for ever. We had a breakdown on the railway yesterday and had an anxious day as 3,000 men at Railhead were short of water, but thank Heaven it all came right by the evening. Six trucks ran off the line and we were blocked for 24 hours. It is a trying matter when you suddenly find the lives of 3,000 men depending on what you do. Do you ever see the *Daily Graphic*? I am sending you a cutting from it, which you will find rather funny; the picture is of Dr. Jennings, but I suppose in London they said we have not a picture of Maxwell Bey; but anything will do, so let us stick the Doctor in and call him Maxwell Bey. I hear also that I have been immortalized in the *Illustrated London News*. Please do not think that I courted this publicity, for as a matter of fact I avoided it, but you have to be very wide-awake to get round these ubiquitous correspondents. I am thankful to say they have all passed away and now you will hear of nothing but Wingate<sup>1</sup> Bey and Genl. Rundle."

<sup>1</sup> Director of Intelligence; later General Sir Reginald Wingate, Sirdar of the Egyptian Army.

On October 8th Sir Francis Grenfell arrived in Cairo as G.O.C. of the Army of Occupation to hear that the railway was steadily pushing its way across the desert, and with every mile facilitating further supply, that circumstances seemed to be adapting themselves to the military programme and that everything was proceeding with the precision of clockwork. "The situation," Maxwell wrote on the 10th, "has developed so far that it is decided to extend the railway from Abu Hamed to Berber—another 130 miles. We have to-day completed 200 miles from Halfa and have only about 33 more to finish it, but I am afraid we have not ordered quite enough material, though there is another 20 miles now arriving at Alexandria." But the work and worry were beginning to tell on him. "I do wish," he groaned, "I was quit of this infernal show; I would just as soon be General Manager at Euston Station as the work I am now doing. All day long being asked to send things either to Berber, Abu Hamed or Merawi. They never seem satisfied, train-loads of stuff go to them and yet like Oliver they ask for more."

The desert railway from Wady Halfa was open to Abu Hamed by the end of October, and the extension towards Berber was at once begun. "The rapid completion of the line which greatly facilitates communications," Kitchener could tell Grenfell, "reflects much credit on Lieut.-Col. J. G. Maxwell, D.S.O. (Commanding Nubia District), Lieut. E. P. Girouard, D.S.O. (Royal Engineers), and his Staff, and on all officers and men employed on this undertaking, which has been so carefully accomplished in marvellously quick time under such vicissitudes and during exceptionally hot weather."

In November Mrs. Maxwell came out again to Egypt and spent a fortnight at Halfa, regardless of her husband's warning that she would have to put up with a good deal of discomfort, that Halfa was far worse than when she was there last, and that she might have to go back to Cairo at a moment's notice if he were ordered elsewhere.



“ We do not seem to be any nearer moving off than we were six months ago. So far as I can see it is very doubtful whether the Dervishes mean to do anything ; they sent an insignificant raiding party past our advanced post on the Atbara and raided a village, but did no harm and were well knocked about by our cavalry.” So Maxwell Bey was writing on the 28th January, 1898. But the “ moving ” was nearer than he thought, and before the ink was dry on the paper, he was told that his administrative task was accomplished and that he was to hasten to Berber and assume charge of the 2nd Egyptian Brigade, composed of the 8th Egyptian and 12th, 13th and 14th Sudanese Battalions.

Kitchener—whose resignation meanwhile had been offered to and peremptorily refused by Cromer—had heard that the Khalifa was satisfied that he was not going to be attacked at Omdurman on a falling Nile, and that the small garrison at Berber was offering a tempting bait for its recapture. He thereupon issued orders for a concentration at Berber and telegraphed to Cairo for the assistance of a British brigade of which three battalions were standing ready. The answer was doubly satisfactory ; the brigade was to start at once, and the Sirdar, not Sir Francis Grenfell, would have full responsibility for the command, supplies and transport of all troops south of Assuan.

Before February had set in, thanks to the invaluable railway which carried nearly all the Egyptian infantry from Dongola and the British from Halfa, the rendezvous was complete and the combined force was posted along the Nile between the mouth of the Atbara and Dakhila.

But to general surprise the enemy did not come on ; internal quarrels were besetting him and so distracting were the dissensions of the Emirs at Omdurman that the large force gathered just outside the town melted away. Mahmud himself, however, at Metemmeh, was not to be denied, and announced his purpose of crossing the Nile and snapping up Berber for himself. Nothing could suit

the Sirdar better ; he had confided to Maxwell that he was apprehensive of damage that might have been done if the Khalifa had struck with his entire force ; an attack launched in comparatively slender strength against a reinforced and concentrated army was more than he could possibly have hoped for. He promptly closed up the troops and moved to Kunur, a village just north of the Atbara mouth covered by the river and the entrenched lines at "Atbara Fort." But not till the 19th of March did Mahmud, with a force of 20,000 in all—inclusive of women and children—leave the Nile and head for the Atbara. His idea of outflanking our left, mopping up our posts on the Nile, and pouncing on Berber from the land side, was upset by our being already at Hudi. He had to keep farther up-stream and strike the river—or rather the succession of pools in a dried bed which represented the Atbara at that time of the year—at Nakheila, some 22 miles above Hudi ; he had thus compromised himself, for he had put himself too far from the Nile to make it possible to reach Berber except by long marches across a waterless desert. Kitchener moved to Ras el Hudi, 10 miles nearer to his enemy, and at once sent out his cavalry to reconnoitre ; as Mahmud, instead of attacking, only made a strong zariba round his camp, the two armies sat and watched one another in the grilling sun for nearly a fortnight.

The reconnaissance, which Kitchener specially asked Maxwell to accompany, was not without risk of the loss of a good many troopers. The squadron pushed out to a considerable distance, was dogged back by several hundred Dervish horsemen, and sharp hand-to-hand fighting took place, the Dervishes making a dashing attempt to get round the whole body.

"The cavalry day," Maxwell wrote, "was very nearly being a very serious affair for us, and at one time it looked uncommonly as if they would bag the lot of us ; we were completely surrounded by their horsemen and could not see a yard for dust, bullets fizzing about, and had a real

attack been pushed home, they would undoubtedly have got the lot of us, as we were too far out in the desert for any of us to have got away."

Minor reconnaissances of little encounters were of daily occurrence and the Dervishes, whose pangs of hunger constantly increased, showed their usual philosophy and recklessness of their own lives. As a side show, a flotilla was sent up-stream to threaten Shendi, where Mahmud had left many of his women ; small parties were landed and took into gentle custody a number of these ladies, with the result that many of Mahmud's black followers deserted him in order to ascertain the fate of their sweethearts.

## CHAPTER VI

### OMDURMAN

ON the 4th April the force moved in 5 miles nearer the enemy, and on the morrow Kitchener told Maxwell to accompany Hunter's reconnaissance for a final survey of the Dervish "*dem*"; on his return it was decided to close up on the 6th to within striking distance of the Dervish zariba and to attack at dawn on the 8th. But first a religious difficulty had to be disposed of. Kitchener, unaccompanied by any A.D.C., strolled over to Maxwell's bivouac inside the thorn zariba where he found Maxwell and his Brigade Major sitting in their shirt-sleeves under a tree. The Sirdar, taking a seat on Maxse's bedding, despatched that officer to fetch Khulusi-Bey, the Egyptian Commanding Officer of the only fellahin battalion, the 8th, in Maxwell's brigade. Khulusi Bey was discovered in his pyjamas and told to hurry up as the Sirdar was waiting to see him. To put him at his ease Kitchener made him take a seat by his side, and a searching questionnaire was made in fluent Arabic :

KITCHENER : " I believe you are a good Mohammedan, Khulusi Bey, and that you have read and remembered your Koran ? "

KHULUSI : " Certainly, Your Honour. "

KITCHENER : " Do you recollect the days of the week on which the Prophet Mohammed fought his chief battles ? "

KHULUSI : " Yes, Your Honour, I know them all. "

KITCHENER : "Tell me them."

After the recital Kitchener said : "Then Mohammed did fight one of his chief battles on a Friday, which corresponds to the Christian Sunday. Tell me, please, do you think our Mohammedans would have any religious objection to fighting a battle on a Friday?"

KHULUSI : "No good Mohammedan could object."

KITCHENER : "Thank you, Khulusi Bey, and I am much obliged for your information."

The rather bewildered Khulusi was then led away by Maxwell, who was strictly enjoined to say no word of the interview but who was not surprised when before nightfall on the 7th orders were issued which fixed Friday the 8th as the day to measure strength with Mahmud. Kitchener himself had entertained scruples as to the day, but dismissed them on being reminded by Maxwell that Good Friday was a specially appropriate date for an act of liberation.

On the evening of the 7th the bivouac at Mutrus was formed in mass of brigades squares, the British brigade under Gatacre<sup>1</sup> in front, then Macdonald,<sup>2</sup> Maxwell and Lewis in the order named, the guns inside the square ; the cavalry were left at Undabi with orders to join up during the night. At 1 a.m. on the 8th an advance was made under a full moon, and when the Dervish fires were sighted and there were hit off the wheel tracks made by Hunter's final reconnaissance the previous day, direction was changed agreeably to orders to move straight on the *dem* on the Arab side. After an hour's halt, line of battle was formed at 4 a.m. and the advance continued. On the left of the line, about 1,500 yards long, was the British brigade ; the Egyptian brigades were all of six-company battalions, four companies in the line and two in support ; a battalion in reserve in the centre brigade and one in column on the right in

<sup>1</sup> Later Major-General Sir William Gatacre.

<sup>2</sup> Later Major-General Sir Hector Macdonald.

the right brigade which was Maxwell's. Lewis's brigade was kept in square in rear of the British right, and the cavalry was brought up on the extreme left. The formation had been carefully discussed and constantly rehearsed, the Sirdar having decided thus to meet an attack if he could draw the enemy from the *dem*. With the break of day the Dervish horsemen were seen career-ing about in front, and in a little time the *dem* came in view, its parapets crowded with men. Within 600 yards of the zariba the line was halted, and at 6 a.m. the artillery paced about 30 yards forward and opened fire. Gatacre's orders were that the Camerons should double forward, pull away the zariba, and make gaps for the other three battalions, and then re-form in columns of reserve ; the Camerons, however, with fine scorn, rushed the zariba, and dashed on, only two companies re-forming ; a mix-up with their comrades, the Lincolns and Warwicks, took place, but no harm ensued and the whole line pressed ahead. The black brigades, as steady as they were brave, fired as fast as they could load, and used their bayonets with apparent glee.

The Dervish horsemen, foiled in an attempt to maul our cavalry, turned on the Warwicks as easier game, but these coolly formed up and drove them away, thereafter co-operating with the British maxims in breaking up an enemy swarm which, flag in hand, had come out from the southern face of the *dem* to try measures with the British on their left flank. With an hour of hard hand-to-hand fighting, the black and white line forced its way to the river, although it was many hours later before the exultant cavalry could be switched off pursuit through the palm groves and thick thorn bush. Mahmud's army was *mafish* ; Mahmud himself was a prisoner, 3,000 of his followers lay dead, and over 4,000 were wounded or prisoners. Our own casualties were 510, and where the conduct of all was superb, Maxwell Bey could justifiably write : " I hear the reports of the newspaper people make out that the British did it all, which is rather rough

on us who lost a great deal heavier than they did, and as far as our work went, we had practically done before Gatacre had begun. We had quite enough bullets flying about to satisfy everyone, and it was a very pretty fight and all the three attacking Brigades had an equal share of the fighting. It was a complete smash-up of the Dervish, and the only regret is we could not get at the Bagara horsemen, who made off in the dense bush when they saw we were winning."

The Army went into summer quarters along the Nile between Berber and the Atbara; everything possible was done to render tolerable the period of waiting for the men: several of the officers were allowed to refresh themselves in Cairo, and Maxwell with a few others were the recipients of a grant of leave which was little more than a trip to London and back again. "I arrived back here yesterday," he wrote from Berber on the 30th June, "the following being itinerary of my journey:

" Left LONDON	10 a.m.	14 June
Arrived CAIRO	12 noon	19 June
Left „	9.30 p.m.	21 June
Arrd. ASSUAN	5 a.m.	23 June
Left „	9 a.m.	24 June
Arrived HALFA	2 p.m.	27 June
Left „	3 a.m.	28 June
Arrd. BERBER	11 a.m.	29 June

"This will give people at home an idea of the time it takes to get out, and it might be done very much quicker, for I might have caught a mail from Cairo on the 19th and reached here on the 27th. The railway extension is very good work and the journey from Berber to Halfa can be done in sixteen hours easily. It is very hot here, and coming out straight from England I feel it more than I did, but I will soon get used to it. The sandflies last night simply howled round my ankles, wrists and other choice tender spots where the skin is nice and

thin, so I hardly slept a wink all night and this morning I feel a near relation to a worm."

A fortnight later he reported : " We are just putting the finishing touches to our preparations for the advance on Khartoum ; Rundle has arrived and has been appointed Chief of the Staff, but the Sirdar told him he did not want him to do anything except stay quiet and not fuss. The latest news from Omdurman is that the Khalifa means to fight it out ; I am very glad of this, as once we get in touch with him we can very soon polish him off, and then with luck we ought all be able to get home so much the sooner. Some of us will, no doubt, make a permanent home in the Sudan, but I do not think the casualties will be heavier than at the Atbara."

By August 4th he was *en route* to Wad Habeshi. " My brigade left Berber on the night of the 31st and marched to the Atbara, where we squatted down for three days without tents and living in a dust storm the whole time, as beastly an occasion as I can remember. On the morning of the 3rd Macdonald's brigade and mine embarked in seven of our river steamers with barges and native craft lashed to them. The men were packed like sardines. The Sirdar seems quite happy about everything and so far is well ahead of his calculations as regards time."

On August 12th : " I can almost hear the pop-pop of guns on grouse moors. I am thankful to say that at last we have got our horses, as I am rather tired of using my ten toes as a means of locomotion on a hot day. . . . The Khalifa does mean to make a fight of it, but I don't think, once he gets a taste of our artillery and rifle fire, that his resistance will be very formidable. . . . Have just heard that the Sirdar is on his way up here from Atbara camp, so I expect soon after he arrives here he will be in a position to get on and finish this business off."

Kitchener's programme, drawn up early in May, gave August 20th as the date of his advance ; he then stated



his requirements somewhat peremptorily, intimating that his proposals must be accepted as they stood. The War Office debated but did not demur, and in a letter of June 1st not only agreed to every item, but actually volunteered an extra battalion to proceed to Egypt so soon as the advance should begin. From camp at Wady Hamed Maxwell wrote on the 20th August: "We have had a very hard time of it the last few days, as owing to the height of the Nile and a danger of inundation we had suddenly to shift camp and come on here about 7 miles nearer our destination. As neither our horses or camels have come up we had to foot it the whole way and arrived dog-tired and so hot. We have a much nicer camp here and have already been joined by the cavalry, artillery and camel corps, so we are quite a big force. No British troops have as yet arrived, but they are soon to be here. I expect we will all advance about the 26th. I can almost hear the pop-pop of guns on the grouse moors. Here we have plenty of grouse, but they are not quite the same to shoot nor yet the same pleasure in shooting. I have just heard from Maxse<sup>1</sup> that he leaves Cairo on Tuesday the 16th, so I take it he will only just be in time. I am now a mass of prickly heat and scratch and scratch myself like a mangy dog all day long."

By now supposition had given place to certainty that the Khalifa intended to fight at Omdurman and to show his hand nowhere else. Our patrols and gunboats had tiptoed up to the Sixth Cataract without finding any trails of the enemy, and everything tended to show that Abdulla was mustering his men for a great stand just outside his capital. Report had it at the beginning of July that of his 20,000 combatants 4,000 were mounted. But before we drew up to him it was pretty well known that he could boast of nearly twice that force of both arms; his white opponent, however, had implicit con-

<sup>1</sup> Captain Maxse, Coldstream Guards, later General Sir Ivor Maxse.

fidence in the power of the modern rifle and was sure that neither the modern rifle, nor the man—black or white—behind it, was to let him down. Some weeks earlier rumour was rife that the French had arrived in the Bahr el Ghazal, and in mid-August it was currently and correctly reported that they had occupied Fashoda with a small armed force. This situation would have to be dealt with ; there had been uncomfortable news from Abyssinia, the enemy was evidently not to be tempted beyond the border he had set himself, and it was high time to ring up the curtain on the last scene of an already long-drawn-out drama.

On August 27th the army of 8,200 British and 17,600 Egyptian soldiers<sup>1</sup> was concentrated on the left bank of the river at Royan at the head of the Sixth Cataract.

<sup>1</sup> This was the *Ordre de Bataille* :

British Division : Major-General Gatacre.

1st Brigade : Brig.-Gen. Wauchope.

1/Warwicks ; 1/Lincolns ; 1/Cameron Highlanders ;  
1/Seaforth Highlanders.

2nd Brigade : Brig.-Gen. Hon. N. Lyttelton.

1/Grenadier Guards ; 1/Northumberland Fusiliers ;  
2/Lancashire Fusiliers ; 2/Rifle Brigade.

Egyptian Division : Major-General Sir A. Hunter.

1st Brigade : Col. Macdonald.

2nd Egyptians ; IXth, Xth and XIth Sudanese.

2nd Brigade : Col. Maxwell.

8th Egyptians ; XIIth, XIIIth and XIVth Sudanese.

3rd Brigade : Col. Lewis.

3rd, 4th, 7th and 15th Egyptians.

4th Brigade : Col. Collinson.

1st, half-5th, 17th and 18th Egyptians.

Mounted Forces :

21st Lancers (Col. Martin) ; Camel Corps (8 companies,  
Major Tudway) ; Egyptian Cavalry (9 squadrons,  
Col. Broadwood).

Artillery : Col. Long (batteries of 6 guns each).

British : 32nd Battery R.F.A. ; 2 40-pounder guns ;  
37th Battery R.F.A. (5-inch Howitzers).

Egyptian : Horse battery (Krupp) ; 4 field batteries  
(18-pounder Maxim-Nordenfeldt).

As the Khalifa was mustering his forces outside Omdurman and making ready for the great massacre of the infidels, as to which he had wholly made up his mind, Kitchener's last advance of over 120 miles met with no opposition and scarcely a shot was fired. But although a week earlier the Mahdi had appeared to the Khalifa in a dream and positively promised that the invading masses should be destroyed to a man, no supernatural aid had sharpened the strategical wits of the Believers ; whether or no due to an overwhelming desire to slay the infidel on Kerreri plains and nowhere else, the head of the Shabluka River gorge had been evacuated and the five guns commanding that narrow pass had been removed, and with them the difficulty, and cost, of taking, even in rear, so defensible a position. Indeed, as the infantry, preceded by a screen of cavalry and cavalry patrols, advanced along the west bank with Major Stuart Wortley's Friendlies keeping step on the eastern bank, Maxwell was among those who had some doubt whether there would be any fight at all ; stories began to fly about that the Khalifa, after bluffing as long as he dared, had bolted southwards with all his troops. But early on September 1st the cavalry—after topping the ridge of Kerreri hills which lay some 10 miles to the north of Omdurman—were greeted with the sight of a long dark line dotted with flags and horsemen drawn up in the plain to the west of Omdurman ; the mounted men were just congratulating themselves that anyhow there would be one zariba to attack,

Machine-guns :

- 2 British detachments (6 and 4 guns).
- 2 Maxims to each of the 5 Egyptian batteries.

R.E. detachment.

Flotilla : Commander Keppel, R.N.

- 4 old gunboats (each carrying 1 12-pounder gun and 2 Maxims).
- 3 1896-class gunboats (each carrying 2 Nordenfeldts, 1 Q.F. 12-pounder, 1 Howitzer, and 4 Maxims).
- 5 transport steamers.

when the line suddenly stood up and revealed itself as a solid mass of foemen. Here was the Khalifa's main army, drawn up in seven ponderous divisions with the Khalifa himself and a large reserve bringing up the rear.

Soon after noon our main body had reached the hamlet of Egega on the Nile and was constructing a zariba; the order was given to stand to arms and prepare for the charge of the Dervishes, who were then about some 4 miles off. "We want nothing better," the Sirdar said to the Brigadiers. "We have an excellent field of fire and they may as well come to-day as to-morrow." But the Khalifa thought otherwise, and in the early afternoon, on reaching the Khor Shambat, a depression which ran at right-angles to the Nile, about 3 miles away from our zariba, the mass halted abruptly, fired a *feu de joie* and lay down for the rest of the day.

The evening wore on and surmise was busy as to whether the Dervishes would attack in the night or be rash enough to wait till morning and thus probably miss a great opportunity. Although our army, in its bivouac behind the thorn bush, was ready to come to grips at any moment, an onrush of semi-savages in overwhelming numbers and in the middle of the night was not a pleasing prospect. The full moon and searchlights from the gunboats, the latter of which mystified and much discomposed the Dervish host, would give ample notice of attack. But moonlight shooting, however steady, could not be so deadly as in the daytime, and the fear must lie that if the enemy hordes should pierce the zariba and stampede the transport animals, the superiority of the modern firearm might be discounted. The idea occurred or was suggested to the Sirdar that it would be well to persuade the Dervishes of his own intention to make a midnight attack on them; a band of the inhabitants of Egega—most of whom were friends of the enemy—was sent out to reconnoitre the Dervish position and were impressed with the idea that the Dervishes would be assaulted in the darkness. The emissaries of

course imparted the distracting news to their acquaintances, and this conspired with the usual chatter of conflicting opinions between the Emirs to produce the required restraining effect.

The night passed in silence, but before dawn our mounted troops reported the enemy on the move towards the zariba with the evident intention of enveloping it and crushing it by numerical weight. Osman Azrak led some 8,000 men straight across the plain on to our position whilst a body of about 6,000 skirted the southern flank of Jebel Surgham and, getting touch with Osman's right, made for the left bank of our zariba. Osman Sheikh ed din, with 15,000 more desperadoes, made for the Kerreri hills with our right flank as his objective, while Ali Wad Helu, with his 5,000, hastened round the north-western slopes of Kerreri and made for the river beyond our right flank so as to cut off any chance of retreat to the north. Such was the Khalifa's plan, and of its result he entertained no doubt; with his brother Yakub, his Black Flag, and a large *corps d'élite* as a reserve, he placed himself behind Jebel Surgham so as to put the finishing touch to the work of destruction which Osman Azrak was bidden to commence forthwith.

Our own force stood calmly in its semicircular position to await the attack. The Sirdar, putting his whole trust in the efficacy of modern rifle fire, extended his infantry—with the sole exception of Collinson's brigade which remained in reserve—in a long double-ranked double horseshoe. On the left of the line, which measured 3,000 yards, was Lyttelton's brigade—with the left-hand man on the river bank—and Wauchope's, Maxwell's, Macdonald's and Lewis's brigades in succession. The 21st Lancers with the Egyptian mounted troops were sent to hold the tops of the Kerreri hills, leaving their animals in the hollows between the two main ridges, and with orders to check any advance against the

Egyptian brigade on the right lest the latter should have to bear the full brunt of a serious onslaught.

The sun was just up when the Dervishes had their first taste of artillery fire ; the Grenadier Guards soon after opening at very long range but not without effect. Other battalions took up the firing and Osman Azrak's followers fell thickly but faltered not a moment. It seemed as if every empty place were immediately and eagerly filled ; the air was loud with curses as the mob, reckless of life and limb, surged on, heading straight for the lines of death-dealing rifles ; there was no sign of hesitation and no sort of pause until they were within 300 yards of the Sudanese brigade. Then, and then only, they faded and failed under the devastating fire ; the dark mass had resolved itself into dark, and bleeding, groups, the groups now became driblets, and the driblets shrank to single men who ran forward, flung up their arms, and bit the dust.

Meanwhile Broadwood and his Egyptian cavalry were doing good work in the Kerreri hills ; with considerable risk and at the cost of several lives and a couple of guns, they drew off a large swarm of Osman Sheikh ed din's followers and led them northwards a long and futile dance to be abruptly stopped by the withering fire of the gunboats which managed to get up within range.

With Osman Azrak accounted for, the next point was to get into Omdurman while the Dervishes were still in the desert so as to avoid any ugly house-to-house fight. The 21st Lancers were bidden to clear the road between the zariba and Omdurman, and in a cavalry charge—or rather in the return from it—calculated to sweep away 1,000 Arabs lurking in a *khor*, a grievous loss of 70 men was incurred and Maxwell was to miss and mourn a favourite cousin, Robert Grenfell. By the time the Lancers had re-formed and recovered breath the first British troops had reached the lower eastern slopes of Jebel Surgham, when heavy firing was heard from Macdonald's brigade which the *Khalifa's Black Flag* reserve was trying to maul.

Wauchope and Collinson were quickly sent to give a helping hand, while Lyttelton, Maxwell and Lewis were told to change front to the right and attack Jebel Surgham and the Khalifa's right flank. Despite the relief afforded to him, Macdonald would have been more than hard pressed had not the three brigades with all haste stormed Jebel Surgham and brought to bear from its heights a volume of deadly fire on the Black Flag and on the Khalifa's right flank. But Macdonald was not yet out of the wood, as what looked like an entirely new Dervish army, but what proved to be 15,000 of the followers of Osman Sheikh ed din and Ali Wad Helu, suddenly appeared from Kerreri's hills and hurled themselves against his right and rear flanks. The doughty Scotsman formed his right battalion rapidly to the right, moved his left battalion into a longer line, advanced his Egyptian battalion to prolong his new left, and broke off company's guns and maxims on his old left, sending them full speed across to lengthen the right flank, thus completely changing front from facing southwards to facing northwards against the new attack. On the parade-ground this movement would not have been without complications ; for excitable black troops to carry it out under a heavy fire was little short of a miracle, and anyhow went to exhibit the quick brain of the Brigadier and the fine stuff of which his black brigade was made up. But eager to be at the enemy with the bayonet, the troops loosed off nearly all their cartridges as fast as they could, and by the time the Arabs had come within 20 yards their pouches were nearly empty. At this second critical moment, however, the Lincolns doubled up and so damaged the Dervishes with oblique fire that, impotent to get to closer quarters, they thought it time to cut their immense losses and make for the desert. The day was won and the Sirdar, could say his *consummatum est*. Advancing westward in a long line, firing as they went, his troops hustled the enemy in front of them, breaking up any groups that tried to re-form, and scattering Arabs in every direction. Just before noon the brigades were re-formed

and directed on Omdurman whilst the cavalry harried the retreating Dervishes and hunted them away from the city. Over 10,000 Dervish corpses were counted on the field and elsewhere during the next few days ; at least as many more were wounded, and nearly 5,000 prisoners remained in our hands, many of whom were forthwith enrolled in our Sudanese battalions. On our side three British officers had been killed and 17 wounded, while of other ranks only 25 British, of whom 20 belonged to the 21st Lancers, had been killed, and 136 British and 261 natives wounded—a casualty roll of under 2 per cent.

“To put the fight into a nutshell,” Maxwell aptly remarked in a letter home, “our fire of artillery, maxims, gunboats and infantry was terrific, and nothing could stand against it. I do not exaggerate in putting the Dervishes at 45,000 ; they marched beautifully, in excellent formation, and delivered a fine but hopeless attack. They were as brave as men could be, and had the Khalifa let us attack him I think we should still be outside Omdurman and many of us in no position to write home.

“Eddie Wortley had a show on the other bank ; you will hear all about it and it will not lose in his recital. Winston Churchill is a (        ). I will leave you to fill in the blank, but use brown paint.”



## CHAPTER VII

### FASHODA

TO Maxwell's brigade fell the honour of being the first to set foot in Omdurman. With the Sirdar, at whose side were Wingate and Slatin, riding ahead, Maxwell led his battalions in fours along the main road towards the city whose dark annals had been marked by crimes and cruelties unspeakable but whose morning of renaissance was at hand.

The afternoon sun was still fierce when the head of the brigade reached the maze of filthy huts which formed the northern quarter of the town. Three of the battalions were posted here to guard the approaches ; with the 13th Battalion as his escort and bidding Maxwell accompany him, the Sirdar pushed on to the centre of the city, the Black Flag of the Khalifa which had been captured near Jebel Surgham unfurled behind him. The great wall played no part in shutting out the infidel ; the last Dervishes in authority, on hearing the Sirdar's proclamation of quarter to those who had surrendered, hurriedly gave up the keys of the city and thousands of Arabs flocked from all sides to seek the Peace-pardon. Arrived opposite the Mahdi's tomb, Sirdar and Brigadier were within an ace of having their career cut short ; two of our own guns, mistakenly left behind on the Wall, opened fire on the tomb and four shells burst within a few yards of the Headquarters Staff. The guns were quickly quieted ; the Headquarters camp was pitched close by, the main force bivouacked on the outskirts of the town, the 13th Battalion spent the night in and near the Mosque Square crowded

with refugees, while Maxwell himself slept in the house hard by which the Khalifa had only just quitted, making his hurried departure through a back entrance to the Square. With him went the rule of a despot whose instrument of government was sheer terror and whose sway was exercised by the simple method of instantaneous death for any hapless individual who asserted any form of independence. The despotism of the Khalifa has been at times, somewhat loosely, compared to that of modern Soviet Russia, but while the latter has seemingly sought to abolish religion, the Khalifa would invoke the power of the Mohammedan faith to assemble daily in the great Mosque Square the chief inhabitants of his city, and anyone under suspicion was ordered to attend six prayer recitals every day.

The task of the brigade successfully accomplished, the Brigadier was again to be detached from his command, and on the morrow of the battle told to assume the part of Military Governor of Omdurman, with Maxse as his Chief Staff Officer. To bring order out of chaos in the conquered city would be no mean or easy task and the Sirdar's selection was open to contemporary comment. But the character of men can be best judged by those who work with them or who superintend their work ; Kitchener had carefully watched Maxwell's strenuous but unfussy methods at Halfa and was sure that here was the man who instead of making mountains out of molehills would be competent to deal with abnormal situations and reduce them to their proper dimensions. The Military Governor was given full authority as well as full responsibility, powers of life and death being vested in him in order to deal with the swarms of scoundrels who, among other rascalities, were already terrorizing over the widows and children of the men who had just died for their cause on Kerreri plains.

The next eighteen months were to constitute what Max-

well would consider as the most "trying" stage in his upwards climb, and his early letters home had an underlying tone of depression. All the fizz and fun—never superabundant—of the expedition had evaporated with the attainment of the objective ; the Sirdar, after his mission to Fashoda, would go home, be idolized, and perhaps only return for a while ; Mrs. Maxwell had, curiously enough, selected the moment for a trip to South Africa and he could not get immediate news of her, nor did he see how she could come up and pay him a visit unless the Sirdar would escort her himself on his return from England ; he supposed the Brigadiers would get some reward, though he was by no means hopeful of any useful honour befalling him ; <sup>1</sup> while he stewed in the sun everybody at home was being made much of and "presented with Addresses is if they had each conquered a separate world" ; he had stayed on and on in the Egyptian Army in order to be present when Khartoum was finally taken, and he saw no reason for staying any longer ; it seemed to get hotter and more unhealthy every day, and a favourite brother officer had died of fever ; food was scanty and they were fast approaching the starvation point ; "unless the grain crop comes in soon there will be a great deal of distress among the people" ; every day increased his longing to get out of the place ; "the people are so unsatisfactory, all imbued with the very worst slave-trading traditions, thieves and liars, absolutely no gratitude ; but that one does not expect from anyone." So ran the chapter of his grievances. There was just a little grim satisfaction in that two of the Mahdi's sons had given themselves up and he could send them to vegetate at Halfa, but punitive measures, however merited, seldom had much attraction for a man who, in respect of fallen adversaries, was always more prone to help than to hurt.

The Sirdar, having dealt with the delicate situation at Fashoda in such manner as to elicit not only "the warm

<sup>1</sup> His reward consisted of a brevet, a Lieut.-Colonelcy and a share in the thanks of Parliament.

approval of Her Majesty's Government," but also a tribute to his "courtesy and consideration" from Commandant Marchand himself, made out his very modest bill for shattering the Dervish power and bringing nearly a thousand square miles under Anglo-Egyptian control, and then proceeded to England to be the recipient of a welcome almost frenzied in its enthusiasm. His absence, though, as he explained to Maxwell, only on a brief holiday, rendered the latter's work a little more arduous and his longing to be quit of his job more acute. Maxwell had now served sixteen years in Egypt and ten years in the Egyptian Army, and he felt in his very bones that he needed a change. Just as the sick man will turn from the food which in health he prefers to any other, so the tired man will have an almost sickening desire to get away from the country which normally is his favourite abode. The Sudan also was to him at the moment as the Poles apart from Egypt, and in the Sudan, unless he could get away altogether, his future for an indefinite period would be likely to lie. Moreover, the domesticity which made such slender appeal to his wife was a substantial ingredient in his own character. Was "a man of forty," he might well murmur, never to taste the comforts and joys of home life? Was the child, so often foremost in his thoughts, to grow to girlhood wholly away from his view and wholly outside his own personal care?

"My reasons," he explained, "for wishing to resign apart from strong domestic and private reasons are (1) I have been too long in Egypt; (2) Future service in the Egyptian Army must necessarily be very nearly entirely in the Sudan; (3) The Central Army Administration will be at Khartoum; (4) The hot season here will be unbearable. The only reason I can see for not doing so is the loss of income, which though serious is not insurmountable. I think we have now got into the very worst type of Arab. The inhabitants of Khartoum and Omdurman are on the whole lying, cruel slave-traders, smugglers, and it will take some time to break down these traditions. The worst

feature to my mind being the way they give false evidence against each other. Omdurman is full of women who prefer, it appears, to go about as nearly naked as possible, the favourite dress being a sort of string petticoat (which just hides 'possible' and no more), but they are so revoltingly ugly, I wonder the Almighty did not stop the manufacture!! The town too is getting very near starvation, and unless the new growth of grain drops in soon, we will be in a bad way." (Oct. 28th.)

And things which Maxwell usually turned to, or turned from, with a jest seemed somehow just now purely distasteful, if not intolerably irksome. "This place and this life," he complained, "is very trying to the temper and I am much afraid you will find me on my return cantankerous and unbearable; the people here almost drive one mad with their everlasting petitions, on every conceivable sort of rubbish. One man came in yesterday and said his property had been stolen from him, somewhere near the Equator, and I really think he thought I ought at once to either go there myself or send an expedition. . . . I wish we could begin building houses and barracks, but I have no engineer-officers and cannot well do without them; all that are here are fully employed on railway work and bridging. . . . I quite agree in what Cecil Rhodes says, but the reopening of the Sudan will mean a good deal of travelling, exploration, etc., which will be done by young Englishmen full of energy and go and with no home ties." (Nov. 11th.)

But happily a little change of scene and circumstance awaited him; although he was to travel still farther from home, the mission entrusted to him was to divert his thoughts, give a new impetus to his energies, and there would disappear the little ripple of fretfulness which for a few weeks had disturbed the broad stream of a usually imperturbable good humour.

If the *rencontre* between Kitchener and Marchand had been wholly harmonious, there was to be a sharp exchange of diplomatic arguments at home as to the position the

French had taken up. Some of the remarks in Parliament and many of the outpourings in the Press were far from tactful, and the cartoon in a famous illustrated paper did no little to lacerate justifiably sore feelings in France. Ultimately, and largely owing to the good sense of M. Delcassé, the Quai d'Orsay gracefully yielded, and the gallant French officer—who sixteen years later was to be found fighting close beside us—was instructed to withdraw himself and his miniature force. It was thought well that a British officer should see the withdrawal smoothly carried out and that such supervision should be under the guise of a friendly gesture.

“Here I am, in obedience to orders, in Fashoda,” he writes to his wife, “and this morning at 9 a.m. bid good-bye to the French mission, and now all is peace here under the dual flags of England and Egypt. I am going up to the junction of the Baro and Juba Rivers to see them quite off the premises, then I will go back to Sobat and see if I can get through to Meshra er Rek. Of this I am very doubtful as the river is quite blocked by the *sudd*, a floating mass of vegetation. Here at present it is very pleasant, lots of hippos and crocodiles about; one of the latter near here has already eaten two men, one French and one Egyptian. The natives here are very striking, the women are perfectly hideous, shave their heads and wear only a dirty skin round their loins. The men wear most curious head-dresses out of their own hair tightly plaited and stuffed with feathers, and they wear a rag from one shoulder and are singularly free from modesty of any sort. I had a visit from the old King who gave me a couple of tusks as a peace offering.” (Dec. 12th, 1898.)

And to Mr. Rennell Rodd<sup>1</sup> on the same date:

“The French left yesterday and the Mission presented rather a pitiful sight in spite of much colour, red, white and blue. The Faïdherbe with two tiny 1-pounder Hotchkiss in the bows, towing three shallow draught boats filled with men, four other boats filled with men paddling,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Rennell Rodd, K.C.M.G., 1899, later Ambassador to Rome.

reminded one of Robinson Crusoe. Their tricolour umbrellas are very tasty. Marchand has been civility itself and I think has really done his very best to facilitate matters. The situation between Germain and Jackson during Marchand's absence became quite hysterical. Germain is a not very high-class Frenchman, with long finger-nails, a dirty face and as conceited as be damned, thinking all the interests of France are vested in his person. I am waiting for a French boat from Khor Adar, 40 miles north of this, and then I go up the Sobat as far as the junctions of the Juba with the Baro and will see them off the premises. As far as I can judge the Bahr el Ghazal and the valley of the Nile south of Sobat are no great catch for anybody ; this country has to be seen to be believed, and is very nearly impossible to describe. An American would sum it up in one word and spell it with capital letters HELL. Marchand & Co. took as little as possible with them and left behind ten tons of dourra and beans. We have taken over a nice garden which Jackson will make the most of. When one looked at their outfit and then at ours, the comparison was ridiculous, our gunboats and the Faidherbe, yet for the work in the Bahr el Ghazal their miserable boats can get where we cannot. — still has Mek fever, but now that the French have gone symptoms of drinkah fever are showing themselves."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MILITARY GOVERNORSHIP

THE Anglo-Sudanese Agreement was signed by Lord Cromer and the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs on the 19th January, 1899, and in Kitchener, as Governor-General of the Sudan, was vested supreme military and civil command.

The net result of this for Maxwell was that on his return to Omdurman he found his work was to be doubled ; in addition to his Governorship he was put in command of the troops, an appointment which he regarded rather as one of the Sirdar's economical measures than as a compliment to his own military abilities. His duties would now range over the maintenance of civil order and military discipline, the cultivation of lands and the adjustment of liquor laws, the grain supply for starving districts, and the restoration of the palace at Khartoum ; he was consulted on questions of frontiers and customs, and had to express an opinion on the grisly topic of the Mahdi's remains and the choice of an Anglican Bishop ; and all the while from morning till night there was to be a stream of petitioners generally " wanting " the impossible and uniformly consistent in demands for a personal interview.

" What this country wants," he wrote to a friend, " is patriarchal government and generous outlays for the public good ; even if a little money is wasted it will come back to the Treasury in time. Kitchener expects the country to pay its own way because he wants it to do so, and he is now accustomed to succeed in getting what he wants. It was all so easy with a definite objective in front of us, such



as the capture of Khartoum—we all knew where we were going and what was wanted—but now we have finance, education, agriculture, justice, and hosts of other administrative problems with no very definite goal ahead. It is work that one and all of us are unaccustomed to, specialists are badly wanted, and advisers ; all this means money and I am persuaded that the sooner the military side is dropped and the Administration becomes civil, the better for the Sudan.

“ I had a letter from Frankie Rhodes <sup>1</sup> from Port Said, saying he was obliged to go off in the *Oceana* as Winston Churchill was expecting him and he has undertaken to edit a book which young Churchill is writing about the last campaign ; he intends putting a knife into Kitchener which Frankie is trying to prevent as much as possible.”

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Rhodes, brother to Sir Cecil Rhodes.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE END OF THE KHALIFA

IN May Kitchener went down-stream to talk things over with Cromer at Cairo and then to take a short holiday—his first real holiday for nearly twenty years—in England. Again there was to rise in Maxwell's gorge the apprehension that the Sirdar would not return and that the man remaining behind might have to serve under another chief, or anyhow be left stranded to deal as best he could with conditions entailing constant, and increasing, anxiety. There was the prospect of an autumn campaign against that "infernal old fox, the Khalifa" which might mean a long-drawn-out hunt through an unknown and thirsty country and, in the by no means certain event of capture, an occupation of Kordofan and Darfur ; there was a crying need for barracks as many soldiers were stricken with spinal meningitis, the outcome of sleeping in houses unspeakably fouled by Dervishes ; people had to be turned out of the towns on account of the scarcity and high price of grain, and their exodus was a peg on which to hang complaints that, if they were to be evicted from their homes, they were not much better off than when the Khalifa trampled on them ; there was the fear of famine until the railway should be on the Khar-toum side of the Shabluka ; there were problems to be faced involving thorny points in Mohammedan law ; the Dervishes had given certain territorial rights to individuals and now outsiders from Egypt and elsewhere were coming forward with claims on the parcels of land, and it was difficult to decide whether the Dervish or the old

Egyptian law-giving was the more rotten ; the place was full of the refuse of the old Egyptian Government who were largely responsible for the tragedy of Khartoum, and it really seemed as if the task in hand would be easier if the Khalifa had made a clean sweep of the lot ; there were marriage complications arising out of the enforced profession of Mohammedanism, Jews in the Sudan had married Moslem women, Christian women had married Moslems, and as numbers of couples were clamouring for a divorce, the future of the children was being hotly disputed, as under strict Moslem law the "faithful" parent can claim the child. To top all this, in June there was a scare about the Atbara bridge ; the river had fallen about a month earlier than usual, railway calculations had been upset, and there was some shaking of heads over the provisioning of Omdurman.

"We *are* living from hand to mouth here," Maxwell wrote at the end of the month. "I have got rations for the Army for to-day only, and you can imagine that it is anxious work. I have sent steamers down the Cataract to tow up boats that have been wind-bound for weeks and I live in momentary terror lest an accident should happen to one of the steamers, for there is only just enough water in the Cataract for the steamers. However, the Nile is rising again and I hope in a day or two to be in a better position. The railway gets along well now at the rate of 2,000 yards a day and to-day completes 90 miles out south of Atbara. There is still another 100 miles to do before it reaches here.

"The bridge over the Atbara has so far stood all the strain of the river, but it has still a great rush of water to stand ; they are getting on with it as fast as possible. It will be a great day when all behind us is secure and we no longer have to think of which way the wind blows and whether the water has fallen or risen an inch or two during the night, but can go to sleep confident that a great long train will come in carrying all you want. It will also bring Cairo within an easy week of Khartoum."

In August came a grant of two months' leave, and the "pop-pop" on the moors of which he had seemed to hear the echo twelve months ago, was to sound agreeably in his ears. Maxwell was a brilliant, as well as a keen, shot; he had been carefully trained in his boyhood and had caught at every opportunity of practice as well as enjoyment of a pursuit in which, until nearly the close of his life, he genuinely excelled. At Highclere and other places where plethoric "bags" were the order of the day, he was always a welcome guest for the great shoot, and even when G.O.C. in Egypt, and at an age when eye and hand are "no longer what they were," he could always rival and generally top the score on the range of any competitor in his command.

From Halfa on the 20th of November he wrote: "Pray note that it has only taken me nine days to get to London from here, and as I spent one day at Port Said and one at Cairo you might say it has only taken one week. I hear that Mahdism in the Sudan is by no means extinct and that we shall have to mind our p's and q's or it will bubble up. I hope that either we or death overtakes the Khalifa soon, for he is the irritant which may at any moment produce acute inflammation. I wanted to go and hunt the Khalifa some time ago, but they would not have it—it seems to me ridiculous to let a moribund old savage roam about as he likes and keep the whole of Kordofan and the Western desert in a state of anarchy."

The writer did not understate the case, as although the victory at Omdurman destroyed the Dervish power, it needed more than one expedition to clear the country of lingering hostile bands and finally to exterminate the "old savage." Colonel Parsons<sup>1</sup> from Kassala had been quick, and competent, to deal effectively at Gedaref with Nur Angara—the leader of the attack at Abu Klea in 1885—despite the latter's large numerical superiority. Hunter had posted garrisons at different points on the river up to Roseires to deal with any trouble that might

<sup>1</sup> Later Major-General Sir Charles Parsons.

conceivably arise. Lewis, with a mixed force, after toilsome weeks of hide-and-seek, had located the redoubtable Ahmed Fedil on an island some twenty miles south of Roseires ; he had forded the river, led his Sudanese across the open, carried the enemy's position, driven him into the river, made 2,000 prisoners, and caused Ahmed Fedil himself to bolt to the White Nile and thence make his way with a handful of followers to rejoin the Khalifa in Kordofan. Colonel Walter Kitchener's march from Dume across a waterless desert of 125 miles had to be broken off, a reconnaissance having elicited the unpleasant fact that the Khalifa was being guarded by a force of 6,000 Dervishes with whom it would have been more than foolhardy to try conclusions. Such had been some of the activities some months earlier, but even now if the Sudan had been conquered, the seal was still to be set on its freedom. During the summer report ran that the Khalifa with a daily larger following was flitting from place to place, and at the end of August Wingate's agents located him in Southern Kordofan within 100 miles of the Nile. A force of nearly 8,000 men was sent up-stream and moved inland on Fungor, but in mid-October the Khalifa, getting wind of this move, shifted northward and announced his intention of attacking Omdurman. The bluff was too thin and his starving suite began to desert him ; his search for food drew him near the river, and at the end of the month the Sirdar sent a column of 2,700 men under Wingate to head him off and despatch him. Landing at a spot 100 miles up-stream from Omdurman, Wingate on November 22nd got into touch with Ahmed Fedil, attacked him, killed 400 men and captured all the grain he was taking to the Khalifa ; he then made two fine marches and finally surprised the ex-tyrant at El Gedid before dawn on the 24th. After repelling a fierce rush in the semi-darkness, our troops drove the enemy back on to their camp, and slew quantities of them, including the infamous Khalifa Abdulla himself and his chief captains ; Ali Wad Helu, Ahmed Fedil and many other important

Emirs, on seeing the day lost, had calmly squatted down on their sheepskins to await the stroke of death ; 9,000 prisoners including camp followers were taken and the Dervish losses in killed were not less than 600.

Wingate had displayed both dash and judgment ; a reverse at the hands of a fierce enemy, much superior in numerical strength, in a waterless desert, might have meant a repetition of the hideous Hicks disaster in the same province. The Commander had staked all on a bold attack and the issue had wholly justified him. And all unconsciously he was being tested ; he had been a Director of Intelligence of first-rate value, and Adjutant-General, but, so far, had commanded no troops in the field. Now he had given proof of his work in the open no less than in the office, and his succession to the Sirdarship was assured ;—and was nearer than he, or anyone, believed.

Wingate's success was in a sense Maxwell's reverse ; the latter had no real right or reason to expect the Sirdar's mantle to fall on his shoulders, but he had certainly harboured the hope that this might be so and was at little pains to conceal his disappointment. "Have I not had shocking luck ?" was the plaint wrung from him. "Here is Wingate, who had his four months' leave, and whose wife has just had another baby, just pops up in time to do what I have vainly been trying to do for the last fourteen months. He certainly has made a most complete job of it and all the principal Dervish Emirs are killed or prisoners. Wingate had two battalions, four maxims, one battery and one squadron of cavalry and about 800 armed natives. I am very glad he was so successful, but I do envy him his luck."

There was now a reluctance—not altogether unreasonable—to serve under a new Sirdar, and there was an irresistible desire to get away somewhere, and that the somewhere should be South Africa. In that opposite corner of the great continent things were going badly for our arms. Maxwell's own regiment had suffered atrociously at Magersfontein, and it looked as if his own fore-

cast of six months earlier that a campaign against the Boers would be "a big and bitter business" was likely to prove unhappily true. In response to a kindly inquiry as to what he would like to do, he wrote on the 17th December to Lord Cromer to say that of course he would do his loyal best whatever his future lot, but that he must consider himself free to accept any appointment in South Africa which might be spontaneously offered to him. To volunteer for service in that region was out of the question, as the ruling had been that any officer retiring from the Egyptian Army would be employed elsewhere than in the new theatre of war. Maxwell had in truth swallowed a double pill of disappointment, for, on the day he wrote to Cromer, Kitchener had been summoned in hot haste to join Lord Roberts at Gibraltar and proceed with him as Chief of the Staff to the scene of action. The outgoing Sirdar had sent for Maxwell to say good-bye, but had made no allusion to any further employment and had merely drawn his attention to the roses flourishing in his garden, and had incidentally remarked that the new campaign would be long and laborious and fraught with more grief than glory. For some days Maxwell was to be gloomily apprehensive that out of sight would be out of mind and that Kitchener would have no further thought of, or use for, him. But for once the man had misjudged his master; Kitchener, as usual looking ahead, had already resolved that the man who had been Military Governor of Omdurman should, when the hour struck, be Military Governor of Pretoria. The Chief of the Staff had scarcely struck hands with his Chief when he easily induced him to take on a soldier whose sword was, anyhow, the very reverse of rusty; before the New Year was many days old, Maxwell had set a term to service in the Egyptian Army and was hurrying to England, there to receive his orders for a campaign, the exasperating prolongation of which was to be due no less to the obstinacy of the politicians in Downing Street than to the bravery of the Boers on the veldt.

## CHAPTER X

### SOUTH AFRICA

THE majority of Englishmen, whether soldiers or civilians, envisaged the South African War as an excellent opportunity for settling a vexatious quarrel in which so far we had not scored very heavily, and the chief topic of conversation on board outgoing troopships was whether Cape Town would be reached before the campaign was over. The early checks to British forces provoked no great flutter at home and everyone cheerfully told his neighbour that when Sir Redvers Buller arrived, the end would be already in sight. But the reverses of Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso following on one another in quick succession in the black week of December, rudely shook the complacency of the country and resulted in the despatch of heavy reinforcements and the appointment of Lord Roberts to supreme Command, with—as an express stipulation of the Cabinet—Lord Kitchener as his Chief-of-Staff.

While Maxwell was impatiently awaiting his instructions in London and crossing the high seas, Lord Roberts having fought the battles of Paardeberg and Poplar Grove, with other minor engagements, had ridden on the 4th of March into Bloemfontein, where a fortnight later he was joined by Kitchener who had been despatched from the scene of Cronje's surrender to prick a bubble of rebellion in Cape Colony.

“Lord Wolseley has been very civil to me and Rundle <sup>1</sup> who is at that mouldy War Office was helpful, though I

<sup>1</sup> Later General Sir Leslie Rundle.



know nothing as to what I am to do or be when I get over there." So Maxwell wrote to his wife in Cairo just before embarking in the *Mexican* in the last week in February, and, remembering her habitual restlessness, he begged her not to think of any trip to Cape Town, "every hole and corner," he reminded her, "is crammed with ladies who alternate squabbling among themselves with the washing of officers' faces." He was at Cape Town on the 14th of March, where, at the H.Q. offices, he found "the usual jack-in-office" and whence he was forwarded to De Aar to report himself to Kitchener. The "orders" were hung up for a few days, but on the 7th of April he could telegraph "Myoline Brigade," which, being interpreted, meant that he had taken over the 14th Brigade, consisting of the Norfolks, the Lincolns, the K.O.S.B.—where he found many friends of the old Cairo days—and the Hampshires. The brigade formed part of the 7th Division under the well-known Sir Charles Tucker, whose racy expletives did nothing to mar his generalship and endeared him to his soldiers scarcely less than his constant care for them. Maxwell found the brigade posted on the hill-side some ten miles north of Bloemfontein, where it remained until the preliminary manoeuvres necessary at the end of April to bring the army into line for the forward move into the Transvaal.

The march from Bloemfontein to Pretoria was notable not for any really heavy fighting, but for the distances daily covered by the much-enduring infantry. Moving on the right flank of the Army, the 14th Brigade made its presence felt at Krantz Kraal; at Zand River on the 10th May, where there was something approaching to a pitched battle for the crossing of the stream, Maxwell and his brigade gained the *Euge* of the Commander-in-Chief, for their rapid and effective clearance not only of Johnson's Drift to secure the passage of Tucker's transport, but also of the Drift a little farther east for the benefit of Ian Hamilton whose right rear was receiving the ugly attentions of a large band of Boers from

under cover of the scrub on either side of the river bank.

Lord Roberts made his entry into Pretoria on June 5th, and placed General Tucker in command of the garrison. It was decided to retain the 14th Brigade as garrison troops, but, on Kitchener's recommendation, the Brigadier, one of the very few officers with experience of military administration, was appointed Military Governor of the town with jurisdiction over the remainder of the occupied country except Witwatersrand.

"Here we are at Pretoria," Maxwell wrote on the 12th, "and I have been lumbered into a very big job. I am Military Governor of Pretoria and have to take over practically the whole of the government of the Transvaal. The Boers are by no means licked yet and we still have fighting, and yesterday the cavalry dropped into a very hot corner and poor Airlie,<sup>1</sup> Cavendish<sup>2</sup> and Fortescue were killed.

"The work I have here is about ten times as much as Omdurman and I never have a moment to myself. I go to office at 8.30 a.m. and come away at 7 p.m. The work of unravelling the state papers will be very great, and I will require much expert assistance. At present I have only a financial adviser and he will have his work cut out. We have bonds of very great value to go through and all the papers in all the offices have to be overhauled and put straight. There is a police to organize, lunatic asylums, leper lazarettos, and in fact the whole machinery of government to reorganize on a provisional basis until such time as H.B.M.'s Government take the matter up.

"Lord Roberts is very nice to me and does all he can to help. He is rather worried that the Boers are not giving in, but I think the next few weeks will see it over. Most of them only want a reasonable excuse to come in, and old Kruger bolting with a million and a half of money or

<sup>1</sup> 7th Earl of Airlie.

<sup>2</sup> Hon. Charles Cavendish, eldest son of Lord Chesham.

more has done him a deal of harm in the eyes of the Boers.

“ I send you a photograph of old Mrs. Kruger. I am told it is the only one she ever allowed to be taken. I was at the Headquarters yesterday and chanced to see in a *Morning Post* lying there that you have taken up your abode at 40, Half Moon Street : I hope you have sent me an account of how you have got on with it as I am most anxious to know all about it, and as I have not had a single letter of any kind whatsoever I am in complete ignorance of what is going on at home.

“ The only thing I know is that “ Diamond Jubilee ” won the Derby, as this was put in Army Orders.

“ A man named Hayes has lent me his house and I am very comfi ; the house is brand new and was, I fancy, bought quite complete, pictures, ornaments, etc., from Maple, so you can imagine it is more ornate than artistic ; it must have cost an enormous sum.

“ Notwithstanding that we are in Pretoria, we keep on losing a large number of men and every hospital is crammed with both sick and wounded.

“ The work here is rather beyond most of us and England will have to send out one of her biggest men to put this country in order, someone of the Lord Rosebery type ; the Boers simply hate the names of Milner and Chamberlain.

“ Pretoria is a nice town and if taken properly in hand might be made very pretty ; the public buildings are very good and I think this should be the capital. Fancy, a Salvation Army is bawling in the square outside ; this is quite the place for primitive religion ; the Dopper Boer is very like the Scotchman who prays all Sunday and lies all the rest of the week.”

Maxwell did not overstate the complexity of his duties or the weariness his work was apt to entail, but current reports went to show that his special blend of astuteness

and good humour was proof against both. He would ride down to his office in the morning and ride back to his house in the evening, but every minute of the interval was filled with interviews, most of them requiring an interpreter and all of them demanding an exercise of almost superhuman patience and unflagging goodwill. Order had to be brought out of chaos, the nucleus of a police force had to be created which later was absorbed into Baden-Powell's <sup>1</sup> famous Corps, petitions rained in, domestic difficulties had to be adjusted, permits had to be granted or refused—and the Military Governor's special forte was that he could clothe a refusal so as to make it almost as attractive as an acquiescence,—undesirables had to be marked down and evildoers, who had been let loose by the change of master, had to be locked up ;—in a word, a benevolent military autocracy had to be maintained without at any moment, or at any point, overlapping the authority of Army Headquarters.

"I get very bored at the end of the day," was the burden of a letter in mid-July, "and long for the veldt again. With all its hardships it is a freer life and much more enjoyable. Lady Roberts has arrived here and, as Kitchener says, she has represented nearly 500 tons of supplies, for her ladyship came up in a special train and upset all arrangements. However, the old Chief must be looked after, and I am sure we grudge him nothing. He is a dear old man and has been most kind to me. These devils of Boers are just as full of life as ever and I see not a chance of bringing them to book. They are much better than we are at this scratch sort of war, have better horses, know more of the country, etc., besides it is difficult to say when they will have enough of it. I dined with Dudley last night and met Frank Teck and the young Duke of Westminster.<sup>2</sup> What a nice boy the latter is, unspoilt and perhaps unspoilable."

<sup>1</sup> Created Lord Baden-Powell 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Fifteen years later the "nice boy" was to render him signal service on the western frontier of Egypt.

In August a graver note had to be struck. "I am just in the midst of a conspiracy to carry off Lord Roberts. What a coup it would be if the Boers spirited him away. But that great police officer Maxse <sup>1</sup> snapped the plot in the bud. Now the delinquents are all in jail."

The "plot" was the outcome of machinations set afoot by a handful of clever men who assumed the rôle of peaceful citizens and were living under British protection. The ringleader was one Cordova, a German who had served in the Boer police force and had signed a parole containing a definite pledge that he would take no further part in the war ; in virtue of his parole this miscreant was allowed to move about as and where he pleased instead of remaining under lock and key. But his movements somehow aroused the suspicions of the Military Governor, who picked up bit by bit information that a plan was being prepared to kidnap Lord Roberts and carry him off to be a valuable asset in Boer hands for any peace negotiations. Nor was the notion so preposterous as it might *prima facie* seem. Sentries were duly posted on the front entrance of the house occupied by the "Chief" and his family, but he was apt to stroll about in the garden at the back buried in thought, and at his special request quite alone. A few desperate men with horses waiting on the back road might without difficulty have pounced on him, silenced him, and carried him off to a Boer commando on the outskirts of Pretoria. For a whole month the plan was being woven and perfected in every detail and, at considerable risk, communication was kept up with the Boer commandos, one of them promising to remain as close as possible to Pretoria on the date decided for the capture. But the plotters had reckoned without the man whom they thought to be wholly immersed in purely routine matters ; Maxwell gave them plenty of rope and no cause to think that they were under any suspicion ; he sent no one to dog their footsteps or try and trap them into conversation, but his "Intelligence" was so accurate that a few nights

<sup>1</sup> Maxwell had at once engaged Maxse as his Staff Officer.

before the afternoon fixed by the conspirators, the Military Governor was up and doing, and arrested the band wholesale. Cordova was tried in open court, convicted and shot, despite Lord Roberts' amiable attempt to have the sentence commuted ; from that moment Pretoria ceased to be the hotbed of dangerous intrigue, and every citizen knew that it behoved him to walk cautiously.

Two months earlier Kitchener at Heilbron station had nearly fallen into the hands of De Wet, and a shudder had then gone through the Army ; speculation was now again busy as to what effect a catastrophe, which Maxwell's vigilance was to prevent, would have had on the war. It was difficult to think how a Boer commander, in default of a fortress, could have retained his captive, but a commander who snapped his fingers at the trammels of military procedure would certainly have exploited to the utmost his priceless haul. It is by no means unthinkable that with the beloved "Bobs" at the mercy of their opponents, the British people might have been pushed or persuaded into clamouring for a premature peace. Anyhow, the Army in the field would have had a shock from which it would not have easily recovered, and anyhow also the honour was well deserved which enabled Maxwell to write : " You are now the wife of a Knight, but a K.C.B. adds nothing to the income but may to the expense ; what can we do ? "

" The wife of a knight," if a rather poor correspondent, was an indefatigable and intrepid traveller, and the spice of danger which flavoured railway journeys, when the railway lines were so often a prey to De Wet and his followers, only added to her enjoyment. At first a veto was put on her journey up-country, not so much owing to the risk of travelling but because there was barely sufficient rolling stock to bring up supplies and troops. " Don't mind what Cowans at the War Office says," her husband wrote. " Lord K. will not allow women to come up. The pyjamas you sent me might possibly fit Philæ but certainly not J.G.M., whose proportions are rather larger." But

later Lady Maxwell paid two long visits to Pretoria, calmly doing the honours of the Military Governor's house as if no hostilities were raging around, and a third visit was only prevented by Sir John being sent to take over a column on the veldt.

## CHAPTER XI

### PEACE OF VEREENIGING

IN November Lord Roberts left Pretoria to assume the post—of which he was to be the last occupant—of Commander-in-Chief in England, and Kitchener took over charge of the Army in South Africa. On his way through Natal Lord Roberts cheerfully announced that the war was practically over and alluded to the remaining Boer forces as a “few marauding bands.” The well-meant speech proved to be wholly inaccurate and doubly unfortunate ; it served for some time to belittle, in the public eye, the importance of the task laid on Kitchener’s shoulders as well as the weary warfare which British troops had still to accomplish, while the Government, taking its cue from the retiring General, exhorted his successor to complete his job cheaply and quickly. No one was more anxious than Kitchener, and every soldier under his command, to set an early term to a war for which few of them had now much appetite ; no one was less anxious than the new Commander-in-Chief to spend an unnecessary British shilling in doing so. Unfortunately the Boers disagreed altogether with the view of Lord Roberts and the Government and determined that the war, whatever its later character and final issue, should be as long and as expensive and as exasperating as they could render it for their opponents.

Through 1901, a year which to many must have seemed interminable, Maxwell plodded on. His work was monotonous, but at least it presented for him this advantage, that he had to deal with human nature itself and not with



dry facts which so often form the Government official's daily fare. "Figures are dull fellows," he would say, "and I have to reckon with men and women who, however aggravating, are anyhow alive." And if instinct made him quick to see to what extent a grievance was real or a claim substantial, his insight into racial characteristics enabled him, in many of the daily interviews, to distinguish usefully between the Boer of purely Dutch origin and a Dutchman in whose veins there was a strain of French blood. Despite his liking for creature comforts the longing for fresh air was at times irresistible. "I would much sooner be out fighting in the veldt," he writes, "and if these perpetual interviews from morning till night go on, I shall ask to be sent to a column. A dreadful thing has just happened here; an old surrendered Boer General named Hendrik Schoeman was with his family sitting round the fireside. In the grate was a used lyddite shell supposed to be empty. The old man lit his pipe and dropped the match into the shell—result—terrific explosion, old man Schoeman and his daughter blown to pieces, a visitor had his leg blown off and the rest of the family more or less injured and the house wrecked. I expect the Boers in the field will say that this is the judgment of the Almighty for his having surrendered."

There was of course the fitful desire to get away, and to his own country; he had been fighting on and off for a good many years and he longed for the sound of the guns that are fired without anger; in the early autumn especially the call from the hills and moors seemed to mock him. He felt that he was losing touch with all his friends and that, to many of his family, and especially to his child, he would be almost a stranger; home suggested all that home means to the servant of the Crown who has been so long and so far from it. "Even old Tucker,"<sup>1</sup> he reminded a friend, "is getting very impatient to get home and be married, being 63 years of age he feels that it is near 'now or never.' I believe his language is quite inky."

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Charles Tucker.

With the operations which, if not to be classed as guerrilla warfare, were specially adapted to the arena of the opponents, Maxwell for a while had little direct concern ; he could only lament that the British soldier, to whom transport must be a vital necessity, was at sad disadvantage compared to the Boer who seemed to be fighting with no definite plan and feeding from no definite base.

The daily round of the Military Governor was only varied by such episodes as : “ We caught three gentlemen sneaking out of Pretoria to join the Boers, so yesterday two of them were shot after trial, so I hope this will damp the ardour of those who eat our bread and shoot us behind our backs.” (June 12th, 1901.)

The “ interviews ” were still perpetual, and as the weeks went on the interviewers waxed more importunate. But the heroine of *Petticoat Commando* draws an apt and accurate sketch of the “ charming and affable Military Commander,” whose acquaintance she made in begging him to allow her and her Mother, living alone outside the town, to retain a revolver and a pistol, when all firearms had to be given up. The request was granted and a friendly understanding came about between the officials in the Government Department and the ladies, although the latter made no secret of their anti-British feeling and their allegiance to Queen Wilhelmina. When the difficulties, and the malicious tales, about the concentration camp were at their worst, the British General is represented as pacing up and down the room, his brow puckered with care, his every accent betraying his distress, while he frankly discussed the situation with Miss Van Warmelo, and invited her confidence. The picture is a little highly coloured, but no doubt Maxwell stretched indulgence as far as he could towards two lonely women, no doubt sucking the while some advantage in the matter of inside information. But there was to come the moment when the Dutch damsel proved herself a little too “ slim ” ; her permission to inspect the camps was cancelled, and her other permits were withdrawn. “ Serve you right,” said

her irate Mother, "for showing your enemy your hand." But Maxwell's kindness, however abused, had touched even a rebel heart. "I don't believe General Maxwell is responsible," was the tearful retort; "he is acting under orders, and if I am not mistaken, Lord Kitchener has put down that awful foot of his and there is nothing more to be done."

Dead sick as a soldier might become of administrative work in Pretoria, the place itself had considerable attraction for him, and he constantly turned his mind to what little he could do in time of war to develop its advantages; he was sure that in time of peace, even if the seat of Government were not there, Pretoria would be the favourite residence of the British Sovereign's representative, and the fact that Queen Victoria's grandson<sup>1</sup> had found his last resting-place there might well furnish a tie between the Sovereign and the Sovereign's South African subjects. To him of course fell, in the meantime, all the arrangements for the erection of the monument to Prince Christian Victor, and for the future care of his grave. To one notion he specially, and rather curiously, clung; born and bred in the strictest sect of the Presbyterians and with an intensely acute sense of moral right and wrong, Maxwell's religious convictions, if he had any, sat lightly on him; his grasp of Church doctrines was of the loosest, and his ignorance of Scripture history would provoke a smile. Perhaps because religion was prevalent in that East where he spent so much of his life he was clear, and outspoken, that religion and good order are interlaced, and that religion should be expressed with all the circumstances of dignity. If Pretoria were to stand high in public esteem, Pretoria, he protested, must be a Cathedral town. "Canon Fisher," he wrote at midsummer, 1901, "is very anxious about the Cathedral scheme as the Bishop of Capetown has started the idea of a Cathedral there as a memorial. There is already sitting room at Capetown for 1,500 people in the existing house, whereas you know the

<sup>1</sup> The elder son of Prince and Princess Christian.

old barn here which holds only 300, and as Prince Christian Victor lies buried in Pretoria amongst so many of the King's soldiers and as this town is the Capital, it seems to me that the Pretoria idea is the one to support. But Princess Christian, Lords Roberts, Milner and Salisbury have already been caught for Capetown, and I doubt if funds can be raised for two Cathedrals." And a little later he murmured: "Bishop of Capetown has taken wind out of the sails of the Pretoria Cathedral Scheme, and we shall have to work on the 'thanksgiving for peace when it comes' tack. I shall not see the grouse bird this year."

In South Africa scarcely less than in the Sudan Maxwell remained in Kitchener's inner counsel; so far as "the Chief" confided in anyone, he confided in a friend who could be trusted to know everything and, appearing to know very little, to say nothing. After Omdurman there were now and again in Maxwell's correspondence signs of fretfulness as to Kitchener's methods which admittedly were *suo genere* and even doubts as to whether he himself might be left in the lurch, broiling under a tropical sun, while others were allowed to follow the fortunes of war elsewhere. But in the campaign protracted to quite unnecessary length, punctuated with disappointments, and void of any of "K.'s luck,"<sup>1</sup> Maxwell was heart and soul with the leader on whose broad if weary shoulders a staggering burden had been laid. The early disappointment attending the breakdown of the negotiations with Botha which wrung from Kitchener the remark that the war was being continued indefinitely "for the sake of putting 500 Dutchmen into prison at the end of it," the activities of which De Wet, Beyers, De la Rey were the arch promoters, the ugly surprises at Helvetia and Blood River Poort, the Christmas Day disaster at Groen Kop, the surrender of Methuen after a superb struggle at Tweebosch, the almost incredible "slimness," coupled with

<sup>1</sup> "Oh for a little luck, but I never seem to have any."—Kitchener to the V. of I.

dauntless courage, of Smuts, the recurring petty reverses inflicted on our troops, the Blockhouses and the Drives—those dreary twin measures instituted for the confusion of the enemy—the seizure of farms which were serving as intelligence agencies and stores departments, the concentration camps where any unhealthiness was largely due to the not very cleanly methods of the occupants,<sup>1</sup> the obvious impatience of the public and the Government at home, all conspired to make up a depressing tale for which Maxwell's antidote usually took the form of a reminder that Kitchener's mills ground surely even if they ground slowly, and that success which had never so far failed him in the North of Africa would, however belated, be sure to wait on him in the South.

On April 9th, 1902, Botha, De Wet, De la Rey, and other representative leaders, met at Clerksdorp and sent a messenger to beg Kitchener to meet them in person at such time and place as he might choose. Kitchener at once invited the patriots to Pretoria, and on April 12th at his house they unfolded their story. For three weeks peace negotiations dragged on, all the while the Free-Staters acting as a dangerous drag on the Transvaalers. While the latter were by now almost solid for peace, the former, still fired by Steyn's exalted sense of duty, until the very eleventh hour when Steyn resigned his responsibility as President, pronounced themselves ready to go on with as weary a warfare as was ever accomplished. On the British side the difference between Milner and Kitchener was curiously marked, for while the Soldier stood firm for reconciliation, the Statesman was inclined, at all costs,

<sup>1</sup> "You can tell anyone who asks that they are going well, the inmates are well cared for, and though the death rate amongst children is excessive, it is in most cases the fault of the mothers themselves. There has been a severe epidemic of measles and as you know this only requires care. They won't have anything to do with doctors or nurses and prefer their own squalid methods and truly wonderful nostrums." (Maxwell to Lady Maxwell.)

towards stern measures ; the one insisted that British sovereignty in the newly annexed Colonies must be the bedrock of peace terms, while the other, having fought and won, desired a generous peace settlement which would give us in the future, not merely a South Africa *pacificata* but a South Africa *amica*. Thus it was the Soldier and not the Statesman who on the 31st May could murmur in Botha's ear : " Thank God, we are good friends now ! "

But a few weeks before the " conversations " Maxwell had been allowed to step down from his office stool <sup>1</sup> and had been sent to take charge of a column with his base at Vryburg. He delighted in the change of circumstance and could quickly congratulate himself on having put up 450 blockhouses although he had considerable difficulty in finding men to put in them. " I went up the other day

<sup>1</sup> The municipality of Pretoria were moved to pass a resolution :

27th March, 1902.

" That the Chairman of the Council be requested to convey to General Sir John Maxwell, K.C.B., the Council's sincere regret at his departure and their high appreciation of the valuable services rendered by him to the Community as embodied in the following words :

" ' The members of the Pretoria Town Council desire to convey to you an expression of their regret at your departure from the capital and of their appreciation of the valuable services which, during a critical time and under trying circumstances, you have rendered this Community as Military Governor of Pretoria.

" ' They recognize that while filling that office you have always guided your actions in accordance with the sacred dictates of humanity and justice.

" ' The courtesy you have extended to everyone who has had occasion to meet you in your official capacity have been a distinguishing feature of your administration and has secured you the goodwill and affection of the people of Pretoria.

" ' You have exercised with wisdom and moderation the extraordinary and arbitrary powers vested in you as Military Governor.'

" Wishing you a long life we sincerely trust that your great ability and sterling merit will receive due recognition from the proper authorities.

" I have the honour to be,

" Your obedient servant,

" (*signature illegible*)."

as far as the Gaberones," he wrote, "100 miles north of Mafeking; one gets into very pretty, thickly wooded kopjes shortly after Mafeking and it looks a magnificent game country, though we only managed to kill a snake 2 ft. long known as a black Mamba and very poisonous." But his work in the field was to be handicapped if not hindered by a nasty accident; his pony stumbled, pitched him heavily, and his shoulder-bone was broken. "I have just come back with my poor broken shoulder from Lichtenburg. Tommy carried me all the way there, 90 miles, and fortified with lumps of sugar at intervals was none the worse, nor was I except for stiffness and aches in my shoulder. Coming back on an armoured train it was quite wonderful to see the effect of the searchlights on the game; their eyes flashed back the light and looked like little electric lights all over the veldt. It was quite easy to pick up a buck at 500 yards by its eyes alone. A few sheep looked like a brilliant illumination."

On the 1st of June a telegram from Kitchener was brought to Maxwell during a Church Parade, and flesh and blood were too strong for him not to interrupt the Divine office and read out the welcome news of the signing of peace. A week later he could write:

"We are now in the throes of surrender, and this morning I rode out ten miles to accept the surrender of a rebel commander, Van der Marwe: 108 ruffians of sorts with rifles and horses. To-morrow I am off to Runberg to arrange for the surrender of De Villiers.

"My poor arm is better and I can just lift it to scratch my head.

"Lord K. is mysterious about his movements but we think he will be off soon (*see letter, page 99*).<sup>1</sup> He will be pestered to death with making out the lists of honours and rewards."

His own reward was to be the C.M.G.<sup>2</sup>; this he ruefully remembered "would not pay for bread and butter," and he accepted it admittedly on the principle that anything is better than nothing and with a rider that he hoped it

would not be a substitute for the money grant which Milner had dangled before him. Any notion of further employment in South Africa in the nature of the command of a district he stoutly declined, although the empty threat was held out that his refusal might be taken badly and his leave withheld. A rumour reached him that Wingate was contemplating resignation, and not a moment was lost in begging Cromer and Kitchener to consider his claims and recommend his succession. The rumour proved to be an entire myth, and he could only send word at the end of June that he would be starting for home at any moment, there to await whatever military fortune might befall him. But after eighteen years in the North of Africa and over two years in the South "home" had surely much that was sweet to offer him.

1

*June 23, 1902.**From LORD KITCHENER, Capetown. To GENERAL MAXWELL.*

23RD JUNE I CANNOT LEAVE SOUTH AFRICA WITHOUT AGAIN THANKING YOU FOR ALL YOUR GOOD WORK I WISH YOU AND ALL THOSE SERVING UNDER YOUR COMMAND GOOD-BYE GOOD LUCK.

2

DOWNING STREET,

*June 26, 1902.*

DEAR SIR JOHN MAXWELL,

I have much pleasure in informing you that The King has been pleased to accept my recommendation that the honour of the Companionship of the Order of St. Michael and St. George should be conferred upon you in recognition of the valuable services which you have rendered as Military Governor of Pretoria and in connection with the Concentration Camps.

Believe me,

Yours very faithfully,

*(Signed)* J. CHAMBERLAIN.

BT.-COLONEL SIR JOHN GRENFELL MAXWELL,

K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., etc.

*(Original written in longhand.)*



## CHAPTER XII

### THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

IT was always an open question among his intimates whether John Maxwell affected—or was really inclined to—indolence. He was never seen to hurry, yet he could seldom be accused of dawdling. When at work he would sigh for a holiday, yet now, after a long spell of work overseas, punctuated with very scanty leave, he was quite ready and wishful, after a few weeks of rest and “looking round,” to get into harness again. The task now offered him was greatly to his taste. The Duke of Connaught, who had taken over command in Ireland when Lord Roberts was sent to South Africa, had remained quietly at his post during the war and, a vacancy occurring, he summoned Maxwell to his side as Chief Staff Officer.

The time spent in Ireland, if uneventful, was wholly congenial; the duties were interesting and not overburdensome, and in performing them Maxwell might well—and did—say: “*J’ai cru n’y voir qu’un prince ; j’y trouve un homme.*”

In 1904, as part of the outcome of the Esher Commission, the Commander-in-Chief disappeared and it was decided that an Inspector-General of the Forces should provide the Secretary of State and the Army Council with eyes and ears. The Duke of Connaught had just laid down the Irish Command and his claim to fill the new rôle was undisputed. The instructions laid on him were that in addition to his duties as umpire at all large manœuvres he should “form a judgment, either personally or through

his Staff, as the Army Council may direct, on the efficiency of the officers and men, on the handling of the troops, on the standard and system of training, on the suitability of equipment, and generally on all that affects the readiness of the Forces for War."

The Duke brought to his new duties all the acumen and professional zeal which characterized the new school—of which Lord Wolseley may be considered the founder—some of the hard lessons of which had been learnt in the Boer War. Formal inspection, so dear to his uncle the Duke of Cambridge, he detested ; drill he regarded only as a means to an end ; promotion, in his opinion, should depend rather on merit than on mere seniority, and discipline, he insisted, was strengthened, rather than loosened, by every officer and soldier being encouraged to think and, if necessary, act for himself. In choosing Maxwell again for his Chief Staff Officer, he chose a man who shared these views to the full, and the Duke may well have thought that in the matter of military modernism, the man might be a little ahead of the master. Maxwell was essentially, and continually, a critic, but a generous critic who all the while was never forgetful of his own imperfections ; his criticisms, though never sour, were often sharp, and only the good temper which pervaded them would prevent them at times from being unpalatable. Said Fordyce in one of his sermons, "We are never safe in the company of a critic," and certainly, if negligence and ignorance existed, no military organization, unit, or individual was safe when Maxwell's eye lighted on them. He may have been less fastidious than the Duke about externals ; always correct in his own turn-out, the "niceties" of various uniforms, and the tradition associated with them made no special appeal and sometimes puzzled him a little, but with the instinct that the first duty of a soldier is to fight and that his true training is for the front, he would spare nothing and reserve nothing which could be calculated to train and equip armed forces to take their place in the field.

The Army manœuvres in 1904, for which the Duke acted as Umpire-in-Chief, were conducted on a new plan involving naval co-operation ; Sir John French landed 12,000 men near Clacton and after a rather one-sided fight, seized Colchester ; an enemy was supposed to have evaded the protective fleet, and landed in Sussex, and the move in Essex was to divert the attention of the defenders. After a day's armistice, the defending force retired to a strong position, where their commander learnt that the intruders had retired from Sussex and was told to draw French away from his ships. The latter however hastened to the coast, but on account of heavy seas could not embark for twenty-four hours, and it was left to the imagination how he would have fared meanwhile. Soldiers and sailors worked well together ; the keenness of the officers—as to which General Foch was outspoken at the Cambridge manœuvres of 1912—was apparent and the Minister for War pronounced the operation to have been fruitful in results. But for Maxwell, the element of “let us pretend” was too dominant in the scheme and led to situations which might be farcical in peace but would be the reverse in war. Five years later he would himself be responsible for peace-time operations in Egypt, and perhaps with the Essex mimic warfare in memory he determined that, however limited in scope, the sterner side of the picture should be kept uppermost.

“We left Cairo on the 27th after attending the races ; the Khedive did us very well at the Abdin Palace, and moreover gave a large dinner-party of 80, mostly English residents and officials. Gorst<sup>1</sup> gets on very well with him, but will it last ? All the arrangements for our trip excellent, and, after making a bit of a fuss, Cromer and the rest do not find any difficulty in doing what is wanted. We are to stay at Khartoum till the 7th February, then a few days at Luxor, and on to Cyprus, Crete, Malta, Gibraltar and home.”

<sup>1</sup> Sir Eldon Gorst    Agent-General.

So Maxwell wrote to his wife from Wady Halfa at the end of January, 1905, and pure enjoyment evidently marked the months spent in attendance on the Duke and Duchess of Connaught in Egypt and the Sudan, and in re-visiting places where every stick and stone was familiar to him. Like many other workmen, he was apt to be a little sceptical as to the worth of work which he had started and others had carried on, but for what he saw at Khartoum, with whose early development he had been so largely concerned, he had nothing but praise.

Khartoum had "come on very fast"; Wingate had "succeeded admirably and would make a big thing of it"; Gordon College "was no longer a white elephant and bid fair to be a big success"; the English troops were "very comfortable in good barracks and the hospital quite excellent." He glowed with pleasure over the dam at Assuan but mourned over "poor doomed Philæ up to its neck in water," and "it was sad to see the old familiar Nile above Philæ and as far as Korosko, all the palms under water and the villages no longer exist."

At Luxor on the downwards trip, the early taste for archæology, which, twenty years later was to loom so large in his interests, was stimulated anew. "The Antiquity Department has certainly done most excellent work and it is well worth while to pay the very small tax for the preservation of the antiquity; now they are properly looked after, which they certainly were not before. There is here one Davies of Chicago who has made his pile and now takes his pleasure in digging at Thebes. He has opened no less than four Royal Tombs, and by a great piece of luck he opened a new one an hour before we arrived at the Tombs of the Kings, so we saw it first-hand before anything had been touched. It was quite close to the tomb of Seti I; everything was just as it had been left, but, sad to relate, it had been rifled in ancient times and possibly all gold ornaments were taken, but enough was left—still of great value—to make it a great find; very beautiful chairs, figures, papyri and vessels. Then

the tomb of Amenoktip II was new to me and very fine, for there is the old monarch still in his sarcophagus looking magnificent ; I am glad they intend to leave him where he was found. At Karnak, which was illuminated for us and looked grand, an enormous lot of work had been done ; it is much clearer of rubbish than formerly and many of the fine columns have been mended and reconstructed, so one gets a much better idea of what it originally looked like. The next day we went to mediæval Abou, and the tombs of the queens lately discovered ; the tomb of Queen Nefartari was one of the best I have seen. There are here the Empress Eugénie, the Devonshires, Colebrooke, Cassel and others. I send for your critical inspection the best efforts in water colours I have so far done, but I am not a first class painter as you know."

And back in Cairo. "We have sandwiched some serious military work with amusements" ; and with rather impish pleasure he had helped the Duke to draw up a report "which the Army Council will not like." A dance at the Savoy Hotel was "deadly dull, nothing but Jews and Greeks" ; a dinner at the Mena Hotel, to see the Sphinx by moonlight, was spoilt by an unkind eclipse of the moon ; the bazaars were full of attractive things, but prices had mounted high since he was last in Cairo, and most of his "old pals," with whom he used to chatter, chatter and deal, were dead, but old Cohen was "alive and more grasping than ever."

A few May days spent in Edinburgh in 1905 when the Duke received the Freedom of the City were wholly enjoyable, but a July visit to Gotha for the coming-of-age celebrations of the Duke of Coburg only left the impression that German domestic circumstances are less becoming, and far less comfortable, than those in England, and that for many reasons Prince Arthur of Connaught had been well advised to surrender to his youthful cousin his succession to the Duchy. "This is not much fun," he

told Lady Maxwell, 20th July, 1905, "we are put up in a second-class German hotel with only one bathroom. The Duke is at the Palace where there are a crowd of Princes of sorts. The young Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha seems a very nice intelligent boy and has done his part of the show extremely well. I never saw such a lot of ugly women as the Germans, the men are good-looking but the 'Fraus' awful. We live in full dress and find it rather irksome. We go to Coburg on Friday and leave at four on Sunday and will be back in London on Monday the 24th."

The Inspector-General's supervision ranged over all Coast Defences, and the Channel Islands had to be visited and reported on; the Chief Staff Officer was always rather doubtful whether the carefully drawn appreciations, suggestions and criticisms were other than perfunctorily perused at the War Office to be then pigeon-holed by scornful subordinates. "Spent yesterday and Sunday," he wrote from Cowes on the 6th August, "inspecting Portsmouth defences and Isle of Wight forts; the Duke went on board the Royal yacht yesterday and I came on here where I am bored to death. Nothing to do but sit in the Squadron gardens and neither they nor the people in them are exciting. Next Friday we go to Salisbury to inspect and two days later to Ireland, not returning till the 27th. Hope you enjoyed Goodwood. I hear most people lost their money so I'm not sorry I did not go. We are to leave Falmouth on 21st September on board the *Monmouth* to inspect the Coast Defences."

Five years earlier the Duke of Connaught, however bitterly disappointed, had bowed to the wise decisions which precluded him from taking part in the Boer campaign. But with a South Africa who had forgiven and forgotten any old sores, he would lose no time in traversing a theatre of war, every scene of which he had eagerly followed. Maxwell, revelling in the thought that

he would visit at leisure a country where for two long years he had laboriously toiled, and where he would meet and greet many fast friends, was of course detailed to accompany his master. The tour fully came up to his expectations as regards the pleasure and interest derived from it, but any idea of leisure proved to be somewhat visionary, the Duke<sup>1</sup> and Duchess and Princess Patricia being untiring travellers, unflagging sightseers, and scrupulously anxious to "do the right thing" in the matter of functions and variform entertainments.

The start was not quite propitious as just after the train left Waterloo for Southampton it was discovered that the Duke's indispensable despatch-box had been left behind : Maxwell threw out a telegram when passing the next station, and the missing article was conveyed by a special engine to reach Southampton before the boat sailed.

Leaving Southampton two days before Christmas, Cape Town was reached on the 9th January, and as usual every occasion was seized to chat on paper in such way as to relieve the boredom which in her infrequent letters his wife was at no pains to conceal.

"At Capetown there was a splendid reception, etc., and lots of running about. Every night a heavy dull dinner-party, very bad cook and worse wines. I never realized what a lovely part of the world this is. GROOTSCHUR is quite ideal and I can easily understand C. J. R.'s infatuation for the place. The gardens and view beyond description. A mass of blue hydrangea. I saw the room poor Frankie Rhodes died in. On Wednesday we go by sea to Port Elizabeth and then to Middleburg and Bloemfontein. I fear heavy functions at all places."

At Kimberley they were "very well done and spent

<sup>1</sup> The question was raised as to whether during the Duke's stay in Cape Town he should take precedence of Lord Selborne, the High Commissioner. King Edward ruled that as Lord Selborne was not a Viceroy or a Governor-General, he should yield the pas to the Duke.

a day at Mr. Southey's farm, where he breeds the best thoroughbred stock and ostriches as well as farming on a large scale.

"At Stormberg we saw the scene of Gatacre's disaster. At Bloemfontein there was a good deal of inspecting with one day spent at Sannah's Post. We motored from Bloemfontein to Abraham's Kraal and then rode 6 miles to the battlefield of Driefontein and thence drove to Poplar's Grove where we stayed the night in an excellent camp; the next morning we motored to Paardeberg where the directors of De Beer's met us with more motors, gave us an excellent luncheon and took us to see the laager and battlefields.

"Yesterday we went to church and were well baked, for it was like an oven, and, as I told the Archdeacon, as near Hell as matter. After church luncheon-party, then went to native compound of De Beer's mines. Saw several thousand boys who went through war dances and gave the party a splendid though noisy reception."

From Pretoria he wrote on the 14th February that "Mafeking was dull and it rained in torrents which though bad for us was much appreciated after a long drought. The natives being quite certain we brought it with us, thanked us profusely.

"I see Haldane has just published H.R.H.'s last report, in which he shows better sense than Arnold Forster; but we wonder if it has been cut about.

"I hope you've let the house; I have been most economical so far and have not spent £10 since I left England.

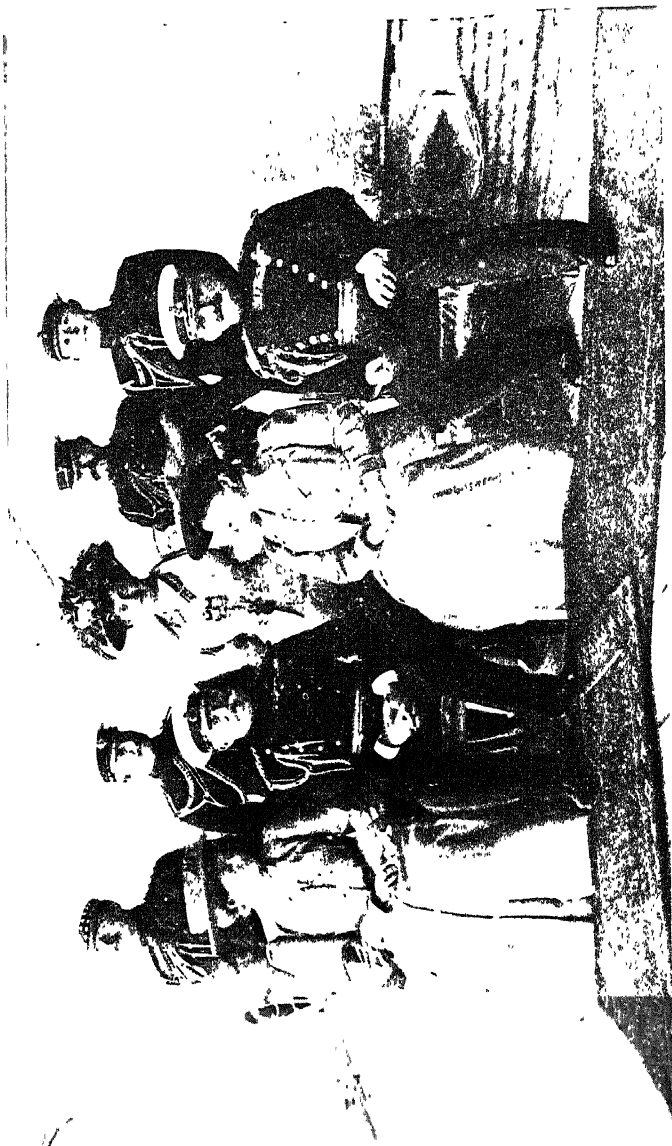
"We are going to the Victoria Falls when we get to Mombasa."

At Ladysmith three days later they had "just tumbled into heat for the first time and it is real hot to-day with a thunderstorm all round which won't burst on us. From Kimberley, where we did the Diamond mines thoroughly,



we went to Mafeking, where we Baden-Powelled, then we came right back to 14 streams and there to Potchefstroom, where we did military inspections, then on to Pretoria. Here I met all my old friends who entertained me at dinner, 120 of them ; the whole day was filled up with Military duties and each night with dinner parties, etc. As a relaxation we did the Premier mines. I saw Sammy Marks and his wife ; they came to lunch, but I only had a very few minutes' talk with them. There is great political unrest in South Africa, and this has its effect on all stocks and shares. The Progressives seem to think this new government will abandon them again to the political mercies of the Boers. They want the 'one man one value' franchise and not electoral districts. After Pretoria we went for 3 days to Johannesburg, where we stayed with the Selbornes ; we did gold mines, went down 1,200 ft. and saw Chinese and Kaffir locations—nothing to find fault with in these. It seems certain that unless the Transvaal can get cheap labour from outside the Gold mines will not pay ! Millions have been sunk in development and naturally they are sick at any possibility of this being all lost. We had garden parties and receptions galore and then came on here via Standerton, Volksrust, addresses and opening of agricultural shows, etc., a few battlefields and here we are at Ladysmith."

The party embarked at Durban on the 27th February, the homeward journey being through Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Mombasa and Aden, and in the Red Sea Maxwell mildly reminded his wife of her apparently incorrigible forgetfulness in the matter of letter-writing. "I'm vexed not to hear where you'll be on the 3rd April, the day we arrive at Marseilles, as I had looked forward to spending a few days together in Paris. I may hear at Port Said. At Zanzibar it rained in torrents most of the time. We've had functions everywhere and not a moment to one's self. We met the Prince and Princess of



H.R.H. PRINCESS PATRICIA      FIELD-MARSHAL H.R.H.      H.R.H.      SIR  
THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT      THE DUCHESS OF CONNAUGHT      JOHN MAXWELL



Wales at Aden and went on board the *Renown*. Jimmy Watson<sup>1</sup> meets us at Suez, so we shall hear all the gossip. I am going to accept the Garrick Club as a refuge for old age which is creeping on."

In September, 1906, the Duke was invited by his Imperial nephew to attend the German manœuvres in Silesia, and to proceed thence to Karlsruhe for the golden wedding of the Grand Duke and Duchess of Baden ; the demise and funeral of Prince Albert of Prussia caused a gloomy ceremonial to be suddenly sandwiched between two glowing occasions.

No soldier with any zeal for his profession could do other than admire, marvel at, and to some extent envy, the huge military machine which over 50 years of strenuous effort had gone to build up ; the opportunity to see German manœuvres under the most favourable conditions was one to be eagerly grasped at, especially with an army corps mobilized to fight two corps on peace footing. Primed by the Duke of Connaught he expected an eye-opener, but so far as his eyes were concerned they were delighted and dazzled beyond expectation. Before the fight began, the Emperor inspected the mobilized corps of which 50 per cent. were reservists ; the turn-out was superb, the physique not less so and the march-past of the Infantry beyond praise. With the cavalry at manœuvres he was not so favourably impressed ; shock action with little variation was the order of the day. There seemed, he noted, "to be much room for improvement in reconnoitring," and his sense of economy and flair for efficiency were alike offended by the Divisional Cavalry being used up as orderlies and for, more or less, ornamental duties and thereby failing in the primary duty of protecting their division from surprise attack. The mode of charging infantry puzzled him somewhat as the German mounted men were trained to ride right over the lines of the

<sup>1</sup> Sometime A.D.C. to Lord Kitchener, then attached to the Khedive.

infantry, the latter being instructed to lie perfectly still and take their chance of any mishaps which admittedly were infrequent. The procedure was supposed to inculcate confidence in the defenders and to teach the charging horses not to flinch at the sound of the infantry fire ; the method may have been arguably sound in theory if the reverse of delectable in practice, but a very practical British soldier was disposed to think—if he did not say—that the “confidence” entertained by the footmen in peace time might be rudely shattered when with real war the cavalry meant “real business.”

King Edward had sent word that, if the Duke of Connaught had not time to write fully himself, Maxwell should send a complete story of the visit to Germany together with his own impressions of the German troops, and their manœuvres ; it was specially laid down that the report was to be forwarded by a Foreign Office messenger and, on no account, to be entrusted to the post. The letter reached the King when he was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sassoon in Scotland, and the reply from Sir Arthur Davidson ran :

TULCHAN LODGE,  
ADVIE,  
STRATHSPEY, N.B.  
28th *Sept.* 1906.

MY DEAR MAXWELL,

The King is quite delighted with your most interesting letter which he has sent on to Mr. Haldane, and desires me to thank you for it very much indeed.

You have brought out all the points on which H.M. wished information and your account of the practical working of the wonderful German Military Machine is a most interesting corollary and commentary on Mr. Haldavies' account and views of its organization.

The King is very pleased with the way in which you described the officers, their knowledge, the troops and their working, as you did not spoil the account by over-

loading them with epithets and consequently the impression left is far greater. What you say about the Artillery corresponds almost exactly with what G. [Grierson] has written.

The King says he does not think our Cavalry could ever be worked at manœuvres on the same lines—(1) Public opinion would be very strong against it. (2) It would undoubtedly lead to quarrels and bad blood which under the iron discipline of Prussia is impossible in the German Army.

The German Infantry is, of course, the finest in the world ; tireless, inured to carrying any amount of weight, magnificently disciplined and splendidly trained.

The King has told Haldavies to return your letter to him at once, as he wishes to send it on to the Prince of Wales.

The King telegraphed on Sunday giving (private) permission to accept the decorations conferred on you and the other members of the Duke of Connaught's Staff by the German Emperor.

"Breslau is not a very exciting town," Maxwell wrote on the 8th September, "but for the moment is Emperor mad and thinks of nothing else ; busts or photographs of the Emperor or Empress in every window.

"A big dinner at the Castle last night to the nobles of Silesia.

"To-morrow we have a big church parade and afterwards assist at the unveiling of a statue to Clausewitz, the great German master of the art of war.

"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday we have manœuvres near Lignitz, then we go to Frankfort and Karlsruhe. I am very glad I came, for it is all very interesting and no play about the German Army.

"The uniforms are magnificent especially the Cuirassiers of the Garde Corps. You know it, white, with breastplate and helmet.

"The officers are very civil to us and the Emperor to-day

has made H.R.H. a Field-Marshal in the German Army, so we are all very pleased. We had a most impressive church parade to-day. I must say the Emperor plays the game and makes all Germany follow him, which is, I take it, an absolute necessity if Germany is to keep her place in the world. I now understand a great deal of what was formerly Greek to me, and Kaiser Wilhelm understands his Germany and makes the most of it.

"The Empress is quite charming—she has a most sympathetic smile and looks very regal—wears magnificent jewels and gowns and plays her part to perfection.

"To-night we all dine with the Cardinal who keeps a very good cellar and is most hospitable.

"To-day we drove to the parade-ground, mounted our horses and rode on to the parade ; an astounding sight. Forty thousand magnificently trained soldiers, excellent physique ; the infantry were to my mind especially good, but the cavalry, artillery, pioneers and train were also excellent. It did me real good to see them and hurt me to think that we might be as good if we were only left alone by politicians and the nation really wanted to have an army.

"This country is a nation of soldiers and the Emperor very wisely makes the most of it, and if he sometimes appears to be boastful, well, all I can say is that he has something to boast about, and when one considers that he has 24 other Army Corps all equally well found and trained, it is no wonder that he feels impulsive.

"There is no doubt also that the German General Staff is as good as possible, every arrangement is splendidly done, no fuss or bother but done, and done well. After our tiny army and the talk and fuss there is about everything, this certainly is a revelation to me. I always thought it was good, but had no idea it was so thoroughly good—till to-night."

And from Karlsruhe on the 18th, "Yesterday after travelling all night we returned to Breslau and went on

with the Emperor to the funeral of Prince Albert of Prussia. After it was all over we had lunch with H.I.M. and then came on here, arriving at 9 a.m. I had 1½ hours' very interesting conversation with Kaiser Wilhelm. He is a wonder, and incidentally he gave me 2nd class of Red Eagle. At 4 o'clock to-day the Duke invested the Grand Duke of Baden with the Garter, and then we all received more decorations. I am now fairly smothered. The old Duke and Duchess<sup>1</sup> are the nicest old things you ever saw—so kind. I felt at home at once, for Princess Margaret and Prince Gustaf of Sweden are here, also the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden, and I know most of their suite. For the next two days we shall live in a whirl of functions ; full dress all day long. The old Grand Duke and Duchess of Baden are the dearest old couple one could ever see."

The duties of the Inspector-General of the Forces were now to be extended to their widest range, and early in January, 1907,<sup>2</sup> the Duke left England to tour Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, and Hong Kong, and thence on a short visit to India. The journey was full of colour and abounded with spectacular incidents, but the inspection itself was made with meticulous care ; the report drawn up was of no little value seven years later when British garrisons had to be suddenly degarnished to form the 8th Division sorely needed to support the Expeditionary Force after the Battle of the Aisne.

As usual his letters home were continuous and copious ; the replies fitful and snatchy.

" At the Queen's House, the precious-stone merchants and all their goods laid out for our inspection, very pretty

<sup>1</sup> Sister to the Emperor Frederick.

<sup>2</sup> Towards the close of 1906 Sir John was sounded as to whether he would accept command of the troops in the Straits Settlements or in South China, but was apparently dissuaded from agreeing to either proposition.



they were, star rubies, sapphires, and all sorts of stones. I did not buy any, but the Duke and Duchess did. They were, I thought, very expensive.

"The Duchess, Lady Kitty Somerset and I have gone in for a mild pearl gamble : the fishing comes off next month and we are each going to buy ten pounds' worth of pearl oyster shell and see what luck we have. It will be quite exciting, for any shell may contain a big pearl—no one can tell."

"We landed for a few hours at Penang yesterday where they collected 3 motor-cars for our use, one bought for the occasion by a Chinese millionaire who with pigtail and all drove the Duke and Duchess very well. The Hindu temple was full of semi-naked Hindus praying ; they seemed very pleased to see us ; some of them wore gorgeous ruby rings, but the combined smell of humanity and sandalwood was almost unbearable. They had a wonderful silver car in which they drove their idol about the town during the festival."

"Hong Kong is a delightful place, quite cool and perfectly lovely from the sea. We had a very busy time there, the day of our arrival, receptions, unveiling statues of the King and Prince of Wales, exchange of visits with the British, Japanese and French Admirals, then a Chinese entertainment at the Theatre from 3.30 to 6.30, then an official dinner at Govt. House and a reception after dinner. I stayed with General Broadwood as there was no room at Govt. House. He has quite a nice house given to him with a good garden. Nathan, the Governor, is a first-rate man and very nice. The Chinese entertainment was weird and interesting. The noise appalling. We were supposed to be dining all the time and looking on at perfectly incomprehensible theatricals, we stayed 3 hours but the entertainment went on all night. I bought you a Kimono and some little trifles. The next two days we spent at Military duties with official dinners in the even-

ing. On Friday night we left in a river steamer for Canton. Hong Kong gave us great a send-off—fireworks, rockets, bombs, and electric searchlights galore—such a row ! We arrived at Canton early on Saty., were met by the Consul and an official of the Viceroy (who gave me his coat). We then all went in chairs to visit the town ; it was filthy, smelt horrible, but most wonderful and interesting—I would not have missed it for anything—dense masses of Chinese, streets about 2 yards broad, shops selling all sorts of offal called food, Chinese banners festooning the streets, everybody making as much noise as possible.

“The pagoda of the 500 genii, very curious but not interesting. Then to the shop where feather jewellery is made, then to the painters on rice-paper and then to the jade shops, here we saw lots of jade bangles and ornaments but very expensive. The Duke bought a nice bangle for £50, but they were too expensive for me. I was rather disappointed. Then to the old city walls to see the view and visited other places of interest and finally went to the Consular Tamen for lunch. After lunch to the silk shops, again I was disappointed. I bought you a piece of pale blue silk, 12 yards double width. I was told this was ample for a dress. We wound up our day with a Chinese dinner on a flower boat with Chinese girl singers to while away the time. I append for you the menus ; they speak for themselves and you have only to add to it eggs 50 years old and you will appreciate what a horrible entertainment it was, but we took the precaution to order lots of sandwiches for our return. It was extremely interesting, all very difficult to describe, it has to be seen to be appreciated, but oh ! such ‘tinks,’ I wonder we were not all poisoned. Princess Patricia smoked 7 cigarettes and we all smoked innumerable ‘cigs,’ but nothing will counteract a Canton ‘tink.’

“I have seen no ivory worth buying yet, in fact at Hong Kong I had not time to visit a single shop.

“I hope at Singapore to get a letter from you, we have of course not had any letters yet.”

## THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

## CANTON MENU

DINNER, FEBRUARY 9TH, 1907

*Fruit and Hors d'œuvres.**Bird's Nest Soup.**Shark's Fins with Crab dressing.**Clear Soup with Fish.**Roast Pigeons.**Fried Rolled Chicken.**Scraped Chicken Dumplings.**Fish Soup.**Fried Prawns.**Cockles.**Pigeon's Eggs.**Vermicelli.**Sponge Cake.**Bean Flour Cake.**Congee and Boiled Rice.**Six Savouries.*

WINES :

*Shao Hsing Wine.**Mei Kuei Lu (Dew of roses).*

The stay in India was short but just enabled the Duke to take a view of many of the troops, to revisit scenes with which, during his two terms of command, he had been closely associated, and to spend a few days at Government House in Calcutta. "Minto," so Maxwell wrote, "seems to be as great a success as Curzon may possibly prove a failure when time pronounces its verdict on his tenure of office. Lord K. is hard at work ; I fear he has been let in as regards some of his china, but he has made his house quite delightful ; H.R.H., who knew it in the old days, failed to recognize it."

In September the Duke, with Maxwell and Colonel

Murray,<sup>1</sup> travelled to Vienna to inspect the Regiment of which he held the titular command. "We arrived here to-night at 5.30 and were met at the station by the Emperor—a dear old man in the uniform of a Field-Marshal (English) and very well he looked in it—Guard of Honour and then drove here where we are staying. Sir E. Goschen is Ambassador, and at dinner to-night there were only the members of the Embassy and their wives, Lady Ormonde and the Austrian officers attached to H.R.H., one of whom I am glad to say is Prince Lichtenstein, Military Attaché in London.

"To-morrow audience with the Emperor at 11, then official calls. After lunch we do as much sightseeing as we can. At 6 p.m. gala dinner with Emperor; on Saturday we go and inspect H.R.H.'s Austrian Regiment and lunch with them, after lunch I hope we will see a little of Vienna. If the Grand Duke of Baden is still alive<sup>2</sup> we return to England on Monday, leaving here at 10 a.m. Sunday morning.

"We have had splendid weather since we left, a first-rate crossing, etc., and a fairly comfi journey. Mensdorf was at the Station to meet us. Teck, whose wife has just had a son, was also there, and has made all arrangements for us. I have received the Grand Cross of Francis Joseph, and am now entitled to wear a broad red sash across the place where my tummy was. Yesterday we went to the Imperial Riding School and saw the *haute école* of Charles V. of Spain which the Emperor keeps up." (Maxwell to Lady Maxwell.)

With the autumn of 1907 Sir John French's period of command at Aldershot came to an end, and a very unedifying intrigue was set afoot to require of the Duke of Connaught his office and place Sir John there. It became necessary to find some high appointment for the Duke, or

<sup>1</sup> Later Colonel Sir Malcolm Murray.

<sup>2</sup> But the Grand Duke succumbed to his illness and King Edward telegraphed to his brother to attend the funeral with his suite.

military and popular indignation alike would have been aroused at his being ousted from a post which he was filling both ably and conscientiously. The bright idea occurred to the War Minister,<sup>1</sup> inspired by Lord Esher, to set up a new office, that of Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean, with Headquarters at Malta. Common sense, no less than expert opinion, could but throw doubt on the utility of such a command, and Maxwell was neither slow nor restrained in his remarks as to "the hollowness" of the job. But the King employed all his resources of monarchical authority and fraternal frankness, and against such odds the objections raised by the Duke—who turned a deaf ear to all political and personal considerations—and his best advisers could not prevail; on January 3rd, 1908, the Duke, with his family and Staff, arrived at Malta to take up the very nebulous duties attaching to the title of Commander-in-Chief and High Commissioner.

The "hollowness" of the appointment became more pronounced on close inspection and little attempt was made from home even to render its circumstances decorative. A day or two after his arrival Maxwell was moved to write: "The Connaughts are not at all pleased with the arrangements made for them; it is a shame that things were not settled in a more generous spirit by the home authorities. Of course, poor wretched little Malta does not see why she should pay for H.R.H.'s appointment as they already pay for the Governor and keep up all the Palaces. As for co-ordination of the Mediterranean Command, it is all rot, for there is practically no communication with either Gibraltar or Egypt except with impossible delay. It is much easier to correspond direct with London."

Lady Maxwell showed no eagerness to make even a temporary home at Malta, where she knew that her position would be difficult and that such duties as might devolve upon her would be specially irksome.

"I am depressed," Maxwell told her on the 15th

<sup>1</sup> Mr. (afterwards Viscount) Haldane.

January, "for I received your telegram to-day. I thought you were coming out to-morrow or next day. I have not had a word from you this year ! so have not the least idea of your intentions. I'm having the Villa Bologna cleaned from top to toe and when you are here to arrange things it will look all right. H.R.H. is leaving Malta 5th February and going to Naples, see the King of Italy at Rome, pick up Princess Patricia, leave Naples 8th or 9th, go straight to Alexandria, stop one day there, then to Cairo, stop two or three days there, then to Khartoum, stop there two days, then back to attend manœuvres in the Fayoum, then to Cairo, stay three days, and leave Port Said for Malta. We have to be back here by March 16th at the latest. The more I see of this very rotten appointment the more it becomes apparent that we cannot please everybody. We are bound to tread on other people's toes whatever we do. It will cost the country a lot of money, it is unpopular with the Army, and not wanted by anyone except Lord Esher and Haldane who want French at home. Whether the latter is sufficiently valuable fish to make such a fuss over remains to be seen."

The trip to Egypt served to restore mercurial spirits a little damped by the prospect—which he quite needlessly contemplated—of three years at Malta and by his wife's reluctance to join him there. From Halfa he wrote on the 28th February : "It was very interesting seeing Suakin again and the new Red Sea port, but a very long way to go for a four hours' stay. It was very hot and dusty in the train. I must say Wingate has done wonders in the last few years, even it appears to some that he has gone too far ahead. There is practically no trade, yet every preparation for gigantic transactions. However, it is always better whilst one is about it to do things well. Poor old Philæ is doomed, the rise of 9 miles of the dam will just cover the temple. They are making a new dam at Esnih which will improve matters as far as water is concerned. We met Cassel at Luxor ; he told us his estate at

Komobo is going on well, but it still wants a lot of money spent on it. Did I tell you that in Rome the King himself showed us round the School of Engineering and Cavalry School. At the former we saw what they are doing with dirigible balloons and aeroplanes. *Our* King is rather stuffy with the Duke for going to Italy at all."

If the King were a little "stuffy" about the visit of his Brother of Connaught to Rome, he was outspoken in his wrath when, in 1909, the Duke—having told the Prime Minister that the Command was the cause of inefficiency in peace and would be a cause of danger in war—insisted on being relieved of his duties. But before this happened Maxwell, to the Duke's regret, but with his hearty approval and congratulations, had exchanged Staff duties for a substantive Command, and late in 1908 had succeeded General Bullock as G.O.C. of the Forces in Egypt.

The Duke of Connaught lost Maxwell's services with avowed regret; the frank, free, and perhaps at times uncompromising utterances had been often welcomed as a contrast to the flattering phrases with their flavour of false sweetness with which august personages are so often regaled—and bored. Without overstepping by an inch the line of respect, Maxwell—if asked for it—would shirk nothing in expressing an opinion: like all human beings his judgment must at times have been at fault, but as a rule it was sound, and at all times it was sincere. And if circumstance was now to sever official relations the tie of friendship, forged in the six years of office, was never to be loosened and only snapped—if indeed such can be said—by the hand of Death.

## CHAPTER XIII

### COMMAND IN EGYPT

PERHAPS because his thoughts and wishes had always been bent in the direction of the Sirdarieh, Maxwell's selection to command the British troops in Egypt—which to anyone in the know was almost a matter of course—came to him as something of a surprise. His dream would now evidently not be realized. To say truth it had been rather an idle dream, for Wingate was his junior in age by a year, and if there were no question of promotion, there was no sort of likelihood of retirement. But anyhow Egypt was Egypt, and to command British troops there was a prize to be delightedly grasped. He would meet many and many an old friend and would receive from them more than a warm welcome ; he would revisit old haunts and old scenes with no less enjoyment because clothed with new dignity ; his work would be wholly congenial ; the true training of troops, he always maintained, should be for the front, and his training would be such that the soldier must realize his duty in the last, but likely, resort would be the fight ; he had some pet theories about musketry which he would usefully put into practice ; he would not pull up the plant to examine its roots, but he believed that in many ways the force under his charge, however excellent, was capable, like most other bodies, of improvement ; in short, he looked forward to his new and responsible position with keen relish, and last, but certainly not least, he might look to have his wife and daughter almost continuously with him.

The next four years of command in Egypt were those to



which Maxwell would look back as the easiest and perhaps the most enjoyable in his life. Except for the Turco-Italian war, which only added a little bite to his military duties, the political atmosphere was calm ; domestic circumstances were at their happiest, for Egypt was the only place which could conquer a wife's craving for perpetual motion and change of scene ; there was constant and generous hospitality without too serious encroachment on pecuniary resources ; there was agreeable intercourse, and many pleasant friendships made with officers, and there was much to be thought out and done to render conditions more agreeable for the men, married or single, who came under his command ; there was a delightful tour in Syria ; and happiest of all, in the last year came Kitchener to the British Agency,<sup>1</sup> and with him the certainty that nothing that could be done for the good of Egypt would be left undone. So when, in October, 1912, the hour struck for Sir John Maxwell to hand over his charge to Sir Julian Byng, there could be a review of congenial tasks conscientiously performed, there was the sure knowledge that he had dug himself still deeper into the soil of Egyptian interests and affections ; there were many farewells to be said and many promises to come back in the near future and simply have a good time ; but there could have been no thought that within two years an easy-going, peace-loving General would hurry back, sword in hand, to set a military house in order and to forbid a fierce, if futile, invasion of the banks of the Nile.

“ Unemployed ” is a term capable of a sinister meaning, but official unemployment of a temporary character had no terrors for a Servant of the Crown who really wanted a little time which he might call his own. Save for some

<sup>1</sup> “ K. had a splendid reception ; he is suffering from neuritis where he broke his leg, but otherwise fit and well. Italy and Turkey at war is a parody on recent Peace pronouncements. Our position in the Moslem world becomes daily more interesting, and what about Germany's last flirtation with Turkey ? ”

portion of three years Maxwell's whole manhood had been spent in Africa ; his experience had been rich and varied, but he had missed a good deal that he would have keenly enjoyed. Now there were so many threads of life to be picked up, so many acquaintances he would like to make, so many friendships he wanted to renew ; there were the clubs and the country-houses, the theatres and the race-course, the moors and forests, all that goes to make up the leisured life, of which a man, rather prone to leisure, had tasted so sparingly. And last but not least there was the opportunity of getting to know his daughter whom he had so seldom seen, and the delightful duty of going everywhere with her and of taking care that, in every sense of the word, she had " a good time."

So the days rolled rapidly and happily along for over a year until there came the day when his country accepted a tremendous challenge and called on her millions of men to harness themselves and all their energies to a mighty effort which had to be made.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WAR

IF, at home in 1914, Irish troubles were thick, and even entangled the Secretary for War and the Chief-of-Staff in their meshes, the European sky was wholly serene until there appeared the dark midsummer cloud which, ephemeral as it seemed, was to presage a tempest of blood and fire. On June the 29th, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his Consort were murdered at Sarajevo. The unhappy prince had intimate friends in England, but even by them the political importance of the crime was scarcely appreciated, whilst Sarajevo may have taxed their geographical knowledge. But within a week Austria was seen to level a pistol at Serbia, and Germany, with murder in her mind, was to lay her powerful finger on the trigger. And if the firearm were for the moment levelled at a petty State, it was intended that the bullet should eventually pierce the heart of Britain. “*C’est le ton qui fait la musique,*” and a note of hate was quickly and accurately struck in a favourite German mouthpiece : <sup>1</sup>

“ We have taken the field against Russia and France, but at the bottom it is England we are fighting everywhere. We must prove to Russia the superiority of our culture and of our military might. We must force France on to her knees until she chokes. It is not yet time to offer terms. But between Russia and Germany there is no insoluble problem. France, too, fights chiefly for honour’s sake. It is from England we must wring the uttermost price for this gigantic struggle, however dearly others may have to pay for the help they have given her.”

<sup>1</sup> *Hamburger Nachrichten.*

The last days of July found every soldier alive to the gravity of the situation and waiting for a summons which many of them had long expected and which most of them felt was surely now at hand.

On the 30th July, Maxwell and his familiar friend Sir Henry Rawlinson called in Belgrave Square to bid farewell to Kitchener, who was due to leave for Egypt the next day ; nothing, he said, would delay his return to his post unless it were the expressed wish of the country he should stay—a wish which two days later was to take the form of the Sovereign entrusting him with the seals of the War Office.

Maxwell asked Kitchener if his wife, who was at Baden for a cure, ought not to return home at once. The reply was : “ Most certainly, and you can use my name when you telegraph.” The hint served to bring home many English travellers, including Lord Derby, who would otherwise have been forcibly detained, although Lady Maxwell herself was disinclined to obey the mandate ; she had been assured by Germans in the place that England would stand aloof and that there was no need to interrupt her cure. To her telegram of remonstrance her husband promptly replied that every hour’s delay was to run a foolish and vexatious risk : “ Everyone I have consulted says you ought to return at once. Things look as black as thunder. Chaos on the Stock Exchange, price of food going up, and soon I expect there will be difficulties about money. I have therefore sent you another telegram. I fully expect to get orders any moment to hold myself in readiness—in fact, I have got preliminary orders ! In Germany, France and here one will get no warning, but suddenly mobilization will be ordered, and then you cannot get back.”

The “ orders ” came within a few days. Sir John Maxwell was to report himself on the 14th August to the French H.Q. Staff and serve as liaison officer to the French Generalissimo. On the eve of his departure he again called on Kitchener, who was then established in Carlton Gardens, and asked if there were any message he could

convey to General Joffre. "I have no direct message," was the reply, "but if you have an opportunity tell Joffre that the French ought not—even if successful—to push on with too much dash, but rather make good every advance and wait until pressure from Russia is felt."

From Paris Maxwell wrote to his wife that he was not at liberty to say where he was going. "Address letters to me to the Embassy to be forwarded. The bearing of the French generally is quiet, no excitement but dead earnest." The "where" proved to be Vitry le François, whence he wrote on the 21st that he was as safe as a church, miles away from any fighting and that it was "rather dull. All our letters," he added, "have to be posted open, a good rule as it makes people careful of what they say; there has been no word in any French paper as regards British movements, which is very satisfactory."

Two days later the fog of war was lifted and there ensued the heroic retreat from Mons with the even more heroic stand of Smith Dorrien at Le Cateau.

Kitchener, who alone had protested against a detrainment so far forward as Maubeuge, and perhaps alone had foreseen that our first meeting for fifty years with a European enemy was likely to result in compulsory retirement, was intensely anxious that the miniature expeditionary force should be kept in touch with the French Army and receive from them the utmost support. With this intent he pressed Maxwell for all information respecting the movements of the French troops and was barely satisfied with the only reply Joffre would vouchsafe, that he and his Staff were quite confident so long as no army was actually compromised, and that the retreat would continue till a favourable opportunity to attack presented itself.

Maxwell's mission as liaison officer was to be very brief; far more important, more appropriate, more congenial duties awaited him. A fourth Corps was being rapidly formed in which would be included the 3rd Cavalry Division, and to command this unit Kitchener unhesitatingly

summoned General Byng,<sup>1</sup> a brilliant cavalry officer, from Cairo, and despatched Maxwell direct from France to take charge of military affairs in Egypt.

The mandate came wholly as a surprise and just at first as something of a disappointment to a soldier who had nourished a quite vain hope that he might be actively employed in France and Flanders. Kitchener probably thought that many generals might well prove themselves Maxwell's masters in the field, but that the Army List would be searched in vain to find hands as strong, as safe and as deft as his to grasp the reins of military control in Egypt.

"I have been ordered to proceed at once to Egypt ; why, I do not know. But off I have to go. I suppose Byng is wanted for cavalry for the New Army, but you can find out from Fitz<sup>2</sup> or George Arthur. I know nothing. I have been laid up with water on the knee, and shall have a stiff leg for a bit. The Germans are very strong in the North, but we will beat them yet ; the French Generalissimo does not seem unduly perturbed, and whenever French and German meet, the former will exact a heavy toll. We must all be patient and we shall all have to make sacrifices if we are to see this war through as rapidly as possible." (Maxwell to Lady Maxwell, 29th August.)

The French railway lines were so congested, and the railway arrangements so sketchy, that Maxwell decided to motor at high speed from Paris to Marseilles. The inns where he snatched a meal and a few hours' sleep on the road were mostly crowded with Russian refugees ; his leg had been too drastically tied up by a French doctor and "ached like a rotten tooth." News had reached Marseilles of the capture of 10 guns by the British Cavalry, and while at dinner in a café, he was the unwilling recipient of a boisterous ovation and a large bouquet ; his trans-

<sup>1</sup> Major-General the Hon. Julian Byng, later Viscount Byng of Vimy.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Oswald Fitzgerald, Kitchener's Personal Military Secretary and constant companion.

port to Alexandria was a "rotten boat" of 3,800 tons, and he was without any kit suitable for a hot climate ; he was "loath to leave France at so feverish a moment"—so ran a hurriedly penned note as he was embarking, but there was the cheerful postscript that he was sure Kitchener wanted to do him a good turn and also to do the best for Egypt, and so "*nous verrons.*"

Maxwell arrived in Cairo on the 8th September, and two days later took over from Byng command of the forces in Egypt, the Army of Occupation, however, being under orders to proceed to England. Things were outwardly quiet if a little confused, as during the absence of Lord Kitchener there was no British Consul-General, the agency being in the hands of Mr. Milne Cheetham. The Khedive was in Constantinople, but his absence was by no means regrettable ; there was a record cotton crop but no buyers ; the country was prosperous and scarcely beginning to feel the effect of the financial disturbance caused by the war ; there was no need to keep up the Capitulations ; Byng had repatriated the German and Austrian Diplomatic Agents, and the interests of these two countries had been taken over by the representative of America, a step which the Turks resented and had made the subject of a remonstrance to England ; a large number of German and Austrian ships were at Suez and Port Said claiming protection in virtue of the international status of the Canal ; Egypt was full of Germans, Austrians and Turks, and there were too many able-bodied Austrian and German reservists hanging about, of whom at least 600 should be interned in Malta. The situation, in a sense, suggested *opéra bouffe*, as England, France and Germany were at war, whereas Egypt was technically part of the Ottoman Empire, and England was all the while in military occupation of the country ; the Foreign Office—not the War Office—were directing affairs in Egypt, which would, sooner or later, make it necessary to declare martial law ; all news from Syria, Palestine, the Lebanon—where the Turks were apparently ill-treating the people and making

up to the Bedouins—as well as from Asia Minor was being sent direct to the Ambassador at Constantinople, thence to London and thence (rather fitfully) to the agents in Cairo ; Lord Kitchener would be more than alive to the difficulties of the situation and especially of making any move without breaking with the Turks. Such was the gist of Maxwell's telegram as he settled himself to the task entrusted to him. He had spent nearly thirty years of his military life in Egypt, which to him was an open book. He was as familiar with local conditions as he had been—and was again to be—popular alike with soldiers, pashas, sheikhs and fellahin, and he was too clever not to know that if military arrangements were to be swiftly and smoothly carried out, no better choice than himself could have been made for the purpose.

An immediate duty was to sift the cases of enemy subjects who had so far remained unmolested ; many of them were very old, some were very infirm, most of them had been very long resident. “ Intern the lot,” was the advice offered by fierce haters of Great Britain's enemies. But Sir John was determined not only that each case should be judged on its own merits, but that he himself should be the judge. Here common sense was mated with humanity ; the families whom he spared from the rigours of an internment camp were incapable of injury to the British position in Egypt, and he inaugurated his regime by creating the impression that his methods would be as sane as they were sound. On one point Sir John was adamant ; the chosen associates of the Khedive and the officers of his household must be deported to a man, and with them would go the hangers-on of the Court, most of whom were very questionable characters and all of whom would be maleficent agents of the Khedive, absent in Constantinople. One or two aides-de-camp claimed—and not without reason—to be treated differently, but here Maxwell set his foot down and would admit of no exception to an order which he believed to be imperatively necessary. Later came the question of exchanging very old, or sick, Germans for cor-



responding British subjects in Germany ; the ruling from home, however, was that the former might be repatriated through Italy, but no exchange was desirable.

The first telegram handed to the G.O.C. was nearly a week old and was to the effect that the Lahore Division, almost due at Suez, could remain for a time in Egypt ; he was to make as much use of them as he could ; he was to be silent as to their future destination and to be ready to embark them at Alexandria at short notice. A second telegram, however, was already to hand, asking how soon the division, just then arriving at Suez, could be shipped to Europe. The garrison of Egypt—all arms—was under orders for service in France and was to be replaced by the East Lancashire (T.F.) Division which was rather sadly deficient in artillery ; but whatever troops Maxwell at heart might covet for the safety of Egypt, and whatever shifts he might have to make in the matter of personnel, he was sure that the requirements of Sir John French were immediately greater, and he replied to the War Office telegram that he would only retain the Sirhind Brigade, which he would post on the Canal, and the 3rd Mountain Artillery Brigade, and forward the rest of the division at once.

With the first call to arms a goodly number of British patriots had sacrificed their interests, risked losing their places, and repaired to London to offer themselves for the King's service. But after the 1st October no Englishman of military age, or who had enjoyed any military experience, was allowed to leave the country ; the best of them were to be picked for staff duties, and the others would surely make themselves useful as Englishmen have a knack of doing when trouble is abroad.

Maxwell's General Staff, he found, consisted of a single G.S.O. 2nd Grade, and not until the evacuation of Gallipoli was on the tapis was there formed a full General Staff on a war footing with Brigadier-General Neill Malcolm <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Major-General Sir Neill Malcolm.

at its head. For his personal service Sir John had brought an orderly officer, Captain Ker Smiley, who did not, however, remain long ; two other A.D.C.'s were enlisted, and one of them, the Marquis of Anglesey, an officer in the Royal Horse Guards, having proved his worth with his work, was appointed Military Secretary and later followed his master to share his fortunes in Ireland.

The War Office, who had allowed the cream of their Staff Officers to cross the Channel on the outbreak of war, had recalled the majority of Staff Officers from Headquarters in Cairo, and with the staggering shortage in France, would certainly not replace them.<sup>1</sup> Maxwell may have flattered himself for a moment that he might draw on the battalion officers of the Territorial Division, but he soon saw that every one of them would be required for the training of their men. He must therefore look to civilians to fill the necessary places, and happily found very reliable material which he was able to cut out and use to excellent advantage. There was quite a batch of ex-Regular Officers, who having served in the Egyptian Army were now engaged in the Egyptian Civil Service, and who, at Maxwell's wooing, were quite willing to come once more under military discipline. They were of course not so young as they had been, and were not versed in the science of modern war, but they knew the country and spoke the language, and with all the goodwill in the world, they left their homes to await on the Canal the arrival of the two divisions from India.

Meanwhile, there was plenty for them to do. If there still lingered uninformed opinion as to the Turkish menace and a comfortable belief that the Turk could not—even if he would—cross the Sinai desert, it was a matter of common sense that Port Said was likely to become an important place ; as all harbour plant was the property of the

<sup>1</sup> "I am very fussed just now because everything seems to be wanted for the Home armies, and no sooner is something started here than it is upset by all the officers having to go home." (Maxwell to Lady Maxwell.)

shipping agencies, it was imperative that their goodwill should be secured, more especially as the Suez Canal Company had, very reasonably, declined to be publicly associated with any sort of military preparations. To set afoot good relations with the shipping communities and then to examine with them as to how the port could be used to the highest advantage was the first task Maxwell set to a little band of military helpmates, and the heavy part which Port Said was soon to play in the serious dramas was the best testimony to their tact and energy.

For a fortnight after Maxwell's "taking over" no act of aggression was to occur, but military Intelligence went but to show that before long 100,000 Turkish troops might be available in Syria and Palestine for action against the Canal. On the 23rd September an inconsiderable body of armed Bedouins crossed the frontier near Rafan, the reply to which was the despatch of a small column of Egyptian coastguards to destroy the well at Nakhl, 70 miles east of Suez. But Kitchener, to whom the safety of Egypt was as the apple of his eye, sought to strengthen Maxwell's hand, the more so as the decisive battle of the Marne had freed him from the gnawing anxiety as to the Expeditionary Force, to stiffen which the 7th and 8th Divisions were now being rapidly prepared. He telegraphed to Maxwell that besides the East Lancashire (T.F.) Division, then disembarking at Alexandria, and the Sirhind Brigade, he might also keep part of the original garrison. Sir John, however, coolly replied that as the next Indian convoy with the Meerut Division had reached Aden, he could place the Sirhind Brigade on the Canal and need not countermand the embarkation of the garrison which had already taken place.

But with the race to the sea and the launching of the first battle of Ypres, the strain in France and Flanders induced Kitchener to press for the despatch of the Sirhind Brigade, the only trained troops Maxwell had in his hand. Sir John was bound to point out that the news from Palestine was becoming daily more disquieting, that the Turks

were busy making roads at Gaza and even at El Arish within the Egyptian border ; that German officers were visiting the frontier posts, that a large party disguised as Arabs were moving on the Canal at Kantara, and that Bedouin sheikhs were certainly being tampered with by Turks ; but, as " needs must," the Brigade should of course be sent on. The War Office telegraphed a cheerful reminder that a large force was leaving India to look after Egypt, that the Lucknow Brigade would replace the Sirhind Brigade—which need not leave till the other had arrived—and that besides the Bikanir Camel Corps already promised, an Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade, a composite Imperial Service Infantry Brigade, and eight Indian battalions would shortly embark, while in the near future three more brigades of native Indian infantry could be looked for. This was indeed happy news, and for the moment Maxwell was perhaps even more heartened in noting how rapidly the East Lancashire Division,<sup>1</sup> which had disembarked on the 27th of September, was improving in military efficiency and fitness.

" Keep up constant communication with the War Office and give me all information as to happenings, and the situation in Egypt," was Kitchener's request to Sir John, and most of the correspondence regarding both policy and strategy was conducted by semi-official letters between the two. Maxwell's letters may have lacked the polish which distinguished the allocutions of at least one of his contemporaries, but they were lucid, generally cheerful and calculated to give all the information he possessed.

" It is very difficult," he wrote on the 5th of October, " to put a true value on all the reports from Constantinople, Asia Minor and Syria. They are persistent. They all point to the same thing ; we cannot absolutely ignore them ! The whole situation here is governed by events in Europe. If Germany scores any big success, Turkey will probably throw in her lot with her, and vice versa.

<sup>1</sup> " Lancashire," said Kitchener to Maxwell, " spins cotton ; why not let Lancashire men see how the raw material is grown ? "

I can get no information direct as the Turks guard the frontier very closely—our agents cannot get through—those we had on the other side have all been bagged. I do not want to be led into playing the game Germany evidently wants us to and retain troops here that are wanted in France, but at the same time we must not take too much risk, for the integrity of the Suez Canal is a big stake, and Egypt in a turmoil would hamper us a great deal. The East is full of German spies and they get fairly good information. Germany has the whip hand of Turkey, and there are a large number of German officers all over Asia Minor and Syria. Report says that there has never been so much method and regularity in mobilization, train service, commandeering, etc., as now. This points to German direction. The concentration towards our front is a fact. Are the Turks stupid enough to commit political suicide? Perhaps this is a 'position of readiness' for certain eventualities, when they would be ready to attempt an invasion. I believe they will wait until we are the aggressors! Can they resist German pressure? Enver is entirely in German hands. Talaat, they say, is the real strong man and may not want to ruin his country. You know Egypt better than I. You know what a jumpy, nervous, cosmopolitan lot the Europeans are, and that they are apprehensive of what may happen to Egypt should the Turks move; they all chatter like magpies and the natives all know jolly well the funk they are in. This is the main reason why I have asked for the 9th Indian Brigade to stay on until—at any rate—there is a development in our favour in France. The Meerut Division, the details Lahore Division, and the Jodhpore Lancers have gone on. If the 9th Brigade goes I have nothing but the Territorials, and much as we admire Lord Haldane's baby, it is very much a baby, and has not had its six months' weaning yet. There are over 4,000 absolute recruits, and the rest know precious little. They are keen enough and willing, but people here are not impressed with them, and I fear will be very nervous when the 9th

Brigade leaves. They are certainly not yet fit even to line the Canal—not a great military feat. I would be happier if I had the Bikanir Camel Corps—I suppose they will turn up. I do not like being so much in the dark as to what is going on beyond the frontier. I hear the roads to the frontier are being improved. I conclude that if the worst comes to the worst, you have other irons in the fire to relieve the pressure here—I know nothing of them—but Greece and perhaps India could help a lot. I have put the pros and cons before you, and though my own inclination is to take risks and feed up our forces at the principal theatre—which is what really matters—the point is whether the bait of Egypt and the Canal is considered of sufficient importance by the Germans for them to force the Turks to do the stupid thing. A successful diversion here would be extremely awkward and perhaps delay matters more than the temporary retention of the 9th Indian Brigade. Otherwise we trust entirely to the untrained Territorials, and this is a great risk. The Asia Minor Corps, plus the Bedouins, may not be very favourable, and I very much doubt the possibility of a large force crossing the Sinai Peninsula, but we have to consider what may happen in Egypt if Turkey plays the fool.”

Although a Secretary of State for War should carefully refrain from interfering in the details of his subordinates' work, Maxwell knew that to this one any detail which affected the well-being of Egypt must be of absorbing interest.

“I have just returned from Ismailia,” he wrote on the 31st October, “where I have been fixing up camping grounds for Indian troops. I am putting a brigade at Port Said, a brigade at Suez, and the remainder as reserves at Ismailia. Whether the Turks give real trouble or not, Ismailia is much the best place for these troops. The Canal people are doing all they can to help us and are most generous. I have made a certain amount of preparation on the East bank, i.e. entrenched shelters for Camel

Corps at Kantara, Ismailia and Suez, and have ordered small works for pickets at all crossings. I have arranged crossing-places practically every ten kilometres, except at the Lakes. The 9th Indian Infantry Brigade is in first-rate fettle and if you want a real good Brigade Commander, I recommend Colonel Walker, V.C., of the 4th Gurkhas.

"I cannot see that the Turks can do us much harm or force the passage of the Canal—if they succeeded in smashing the Sweetwater Canal we should be in Queer Street, and so would they! We have evidence that Enver, Sheikh Shaweesh possibly, will make an effort to stir up Egypt. I do not think it will succeed, if the leaders of the Arab movement will play up. I think they will, if we give them moral support—which we will—but this will take some time to develop. I hope you favourably considered the suggestion of supporting the idea of the Christians of Lebanon arming themselves from Greece. They can do nothing without arms. They say they can get them all right and land them, and once they have them the Turks would have practically impossible difficulties in getting at them, whilst they would be always a menace in their rear, if they came on! All such counter irritants would be very useful, as I think it imperative to divert their thoughts from Egypt, which they are told by the Germans will be an easy prey.

"I wish you would sanction my giving a certain number of commissions, subject of course to confirmation at home, to eligible and suitable aspirants here. It would save me an immense amount of bother and be a real use to the various arms of the Territorial Force. There are quite a number of the right sort who cannot afford to chuck everything and pay their passage home with no certainty that they will get anything when they arrive! The Territorials are improving every day, but they sadly lack efficient instructors, especially with so many recruits as they have. I am doing all I can to assist them. The Yeomanry are deficient of a lot of headstalls, bridles, saddles and bits—

lost on the way out and here—this has kept them back. There has been much mortality amongst the horses. I sent home a Court of Inquiry on the way they were shipped out, which speaks for itself. They are still dying from the effects of the voyage—septic pneumonia.

“I have closed down all intermediary intelligences and concentrated everything in Clayton’s hands, and he keeps both the Agency and myself informed. I am also using to the fullest possible extent the existing machinery of the Egyptian Government, and they are both willing and helpful. The situation in Egypt presents some anomalies and difficulties, but really the position of the General Officer Commanding the *Army of Occupation* is very powerful, for it is defined nowhere, and though his powers have been kept in the background for years, yet these latent powers have been there and have never been suppressed. So as a matter of legal fact it is not really necessary to declare Martial Law by Proclamation as is done in Colonies. Of course, the General Officer Commanding must be backed up by his Government, and this is what has been done here. For instance, I take it that in a state of war the will of the General Officer Commanding is superior to the Capitulations, and all foreigners in Egypt are subject to his will !”

To this letter was added a postscript : “I am in rather a difficult position with regard to prisoners of war, and I trust I will be supported in what I am doing. In the first place there are the crews and odds and ends of all the ships we have made prizes at Suez, Port Said and Alexandria—I dare say over 200 in all. Then we have registered all German and Austrian subjects throughout Egypt. This has disclosed the fact that there are probably over 800 who have obligations to serve, either as Landwehr or Reservists. Incidentally there were 180 Chinamen on board the ships—these I am sending to Bombay, *en route* to Hong Kong. I am going to send the crews of the ships in the *Osmanieh*, a hired transport, to Malta, and on her I will put as many German reservists as possible who have no



family ties here, and send them also to Malta. Then we will have to deal with the others. Those we have reason to think are dangerous to the peace of Egypt we will also ship off to Malta, the rest we will take guarantees from and keep our eyes on them. These arrangements will cost a bit of money, for how are we to deal with destitute families? The American Consul-General will contend that it is up to us to support them, and we will argue the point, but in the meanwhile the people cannot starve, and hungry people always give trouble.

“ Things seem to be going surely and slowly in the right direction in France. I hope to hear the Russians have done great things—Cracow and Warsaw—but they seem to be up against a similar proposition as in France. But they have more men with which to outflank entrenched positions.”

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PROTECTORATE

WHETHER or no "as a matter of legal fact" it was unnecessary to declare Martial Law by Proclamation, the last letter was scarcely despatched before instructions arrived that the thing had to be done and done quickly. Early in the morning of November 2nd Maxwell therefore interviewed, at the British Agency, a number of Bedouin Sheikhs and told them that Germany had succeeded in inducing the Ottoman Empire to quarrel with Great Britain. "I have therefore," he said, "been asked to convene the Arab notables and point out to them that their duty is to remain calm and enjoy the peace and quiet on Egyptian soil which the British forces ensure. The British Government is sure that if it becomes necessary to appeal to their devotion to serve the country, full confidence can be reposed in their loyalty." The "notables" assured Sir John of their loyalty, and so ended the little preface to a declaration, the reasons for which were paramount.

In pre-war peace-loving, easy-going England, martial law would have suggested itself to the public much as the bogey-man is represented to the child. The very thought of it adduced visions of violence, confiscation of private goods, arbitrary restriction of individual liberty, and so forth. There could be no notion of military rule being imposed as a measure of safety for the civilian, of its supplementing and not dislocating the ordinary laws, and of its being cheerfully borne for the benefit of thousands of near and dear relatives fighting in the field; least of all

could the spectacle be entertained of a strong government imposing its conditions upon another and a weaker which, moreover, had shown every sign of friendliness.

Yet the declaration of Martial Law over Egypt in November, 1914, excited no animosity and only a few less informed persons in Cairo suggested that it was a pity to disturb a state of affairs which had successfully passed the critical stage on the 5th August and that it was inadvisable to do anything which might frighten nervous folk into some sort of disaffection. Whatever our earlier diplomatic blunders and shortcomings—and they were many—at Constantinople, every effort had lately<sup>1</sup> been made to prevent, or anyhow delay, Turkey's decision to take the field. But by now a state of war with Turkey was obviously at hand, and to recognize the imminence of a clash it was not necessary to know that a Turco-German alliance had been signed on the 2nd August and that two days later the Kaiser had coolly informed the Greek Minister in Berlin of the fact. Nor did it require the reminder of the Sheikh El Islam at Constantinople that all followers of the Prophet should slay Christian enemies of Turkey to surmise that some of the inhabitants of the Nile valley would mentally sympathize with their co-religionists; there was also the constant annoyance, if not menace, to Great Britain in the presence of the Khedive, her avowed enemy, in the Turkish capital. Precautions had to be taken, and there must be forestalled the anomalous situation which could arise in respect of Egyptians who would technically be hostile to the Power actually defending their country; and as the British Army of Occupation was going to be very largely increased, it would be of cardinal importance to afford soldiers the protection against the temptations,

<sup>1</sup> Maxwell early in October suggested that a patrol should be sent out to Bir el Abd, 45 miles east of the Canal on the Mediterranean coast route, but Kitchener telegraphed that this was inadvisable, as the situation between the peace and war parties in Constantinople was still doubtful and the latter was using the presence of Indian troops in Egypt as a lever for action; a move of this sort might therefore result in further pressure being put upon the peace party.

both moral and physical, special to Egypt, the last being perhaps not the least of the main reasons which induced Maxwell to look for Martial Law from the day he took charge. The proclamation put out on the 2nd November<sup>1</sup> was pithy and practical; General Maxwell had been instructed by the British Government to assume the military control of Egypt for its own protection, and in order to carry out these instructions the country would come under Martial Law. Having quoted his authority the General proceeded in a second proclamation of the same date to define the duties laid on him and to explain in simple terms how they would be carried out. The chief points which the officer, on whose broad shoulders would now rest a weight of responsibility, sought to make clear were, that Martial Law would supplement, and not set aside, civil administration; that any property required by military necessities would be justly, and even generously, paid for, and that no civilian would be interfered with so long as he

#### <sup>1</sup> PROCLAMATION.

*2nd November, 1914.*

I, John Grenfell Maxwell, Lieutenant-General Commanding His Britannic Majesty's Forces in Egypt, entrusted with the application of Martial Law, hereby give notice as follows:

(1) The powers to be exercised under my authority by the Military Authorities are intended to supplement and not to supersede the Civil Administration, and all civil officials in the service of the Egyptian Government are hereby required to continue the punctual discharge of their respective duties.

(2) Private citizens will best serve the common end by abstaining from all action of a nature to disturb the public peace, to stir up disaffection, or to aid the enemies of His Britannic Majesty and his Allies, and by conforming cheerfully to all orders given under my authority for the maintenance of public peace and good order; and so long as they do so, they will be subject to no interference from the Military Authorities.

(3) All requisitions of services or of property which may be necessitated by military exigencies will be the subject of full compensation, to be assessed, in default of agreement, by an independent authority.

*CAIRO, November 2nd, 1914.*

followed the simple lines laid down by the competent military authority.

The pronouncement met with scarcely any manifestation of disfavour ; was it due to Sir John's unfailing good temper and unfeigned love of Egypt, or to his discreet determination that the rein of military control should be held as lightly as possible, or to the smooth working of the thing itself, that within twelve months the new order had ceased to be the object of the slightest dread, and that its provisions were often the theme of approving comment ?

It may be said at once that almost the only instance of making use of requisitioning powers was under an edict of the 4th December, 1915, when Maxwell authorized the State Railways to take possession of the land needed to double the line for the transport of troops and animals from Alexandria to the Canal zone. There was nothing unusual in the measure, for the expropriation of private property by the Government for useful purposes was a frequent occurrence ; nor was any murmur raised by the dispossessed owners who relied, and not in vain, on the promise of adequate compensation which was extended almost to the line of largesse.

Maxwell quickly addressed himself to using the powers now vested in him in order to bring about one or two wholesome reforms. He was at once shrewd enough and good-tempered enough to know precisely what to tolerate and what to determine. Strict as he might be in matters of discipline, he would always frown on anything like an unnecessary rule or regulation, especially if such affected individual liberty. He would say that a club, well conducted, should have only two rules : one that a member should pay his subscription, and the other that he should behave like a gentleman. Perfectly temperate in his own habits—except for carrying cigarette smoking to something like excess—he disliked prescribing, or even suggesting, restrictions for others. But he had not long returned to Egypt before he perceived that the newly raised levies of Great Britain and the Dominions were falling easy victims

to vile stuff being sold under the names of whisky and gin. The Egyptian Government was powerless to stop the abuse for the reason that a foreigner, privileged by the Capitulations, was easily able to obtain a licence which could only be withdrawn by an order from the mixed tribunals, and the Egyptian police always found it difficult to bring home charges of the sale, or attempted sale, of adulterated liquor.

The first proclamation on the subject of drink, set out by the General, in the interests of the men entrusted to his charge, authorized the Egyptian police, irrespective of any Consular authority, to enter public bars, whether in Cairo, Alexandria, or on the Suez Canal, where alcohol was sold. If the liquor proved to be, as was often the case, alcohol distilled from molasses and flavoured with filthy essences and otherwise adulterated, the vendor became liable to a substantial fine or a term of six months' imprisonment. With total, and laudable, disregard for vested interest, the trade in absinthe, with a stroke of the pen, was wiped out ; by a later edict of the 29th March, 1915, no person might sell, possess or consume this form of poison, the taste for which had been growing in the country and against which the protest of public-spirited men had been wholly ineffective. Quantities of alcohol sold under well-known trade marks were now pounced upon by the police, and it was found that the stuff sold in low-class bars was so vile as to explain why the consumer was often the victim, not only of violent vomiting, but of symptoms which suggested he had been drugged.

Martial Law was bent in another direction in order to oblige every foreigner to subscribe to the maintenance of the force of watchmen—known as Ghafirs—who, armed with staves, replaced the uniformed police after dark, and recalled a period when all good people were indoors by nightfall. The tax was so trifling in amount that it might well be a source of wonder why any European householder should have objected to pay it. But the sense of justice which Egyptians had always recognized in Maxwell's

dealings was never more sharply illustrated than in a mandate which directed that every inhabitant of Egypt, whatever his creed, colour, or nationality, should for the duration of the war bear his share in providing for a force, which in the two great towns was nightly detailed to protect the European quarters.

So much for the declaration of Martial Law ; five days later it was known that the Sultan of Turkey had slipped his supple fingers into the German Emperor's strong hand ; a state of war existed between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire.

When announcing that Turkey had defiantly drawn the sword Maxwell thought well to remind the Egyptians of the military preparations in Syria obviously intended for a blow against Egypt, of the violation of Egyptian territory by the intrusion of Turkish forces into Sinai and by the unprovoked and German-directed attack by the Ottoman Navy against Russia, the ally alike for offence and defence of Great Britain. Great Britain, he roundly declared, was now fighting for two sacred causes : to guard all that Egypt had fought for and won under Mehemet Ali, and to secure, and prolong into the future, the peace and prosperity which for the last thirty years, under British influence, Egypt had uninterruptedly enjoyed.

So far the pronouncement was his own alike in thought and wording, but the Government enjoined him to add a sentence to the effect that Great Britain, in accepting the full responsibility for the defence of the country, accepted the full burden of a war she had striven to avoid and that the people of Egypt would not be called upon to help. The second part of the Proclamation, imposed on Maxwell by the British Government, was an attempt to secure the goodwill of the Egyptians at a moment when the goodwill of Egypt was of paramount importance—having regard to the fact that British military requirements had demanded the immediate withdrawal of the garrison in Cairo.

The question was soon to be asked why an undertaking was cheerfully given when there was little likelihood of its being carried out ; the answer to it must be sought in the folds of the consuming desire to keep the breast of Egypt free from disquiet, disaffection or undue anxiety. It would have been more prudent, and certainly more accurate, to have given a general assurance that no Egyptian would be conscripted, as with the exception of the units which took part in the defence of the Canal, Egyptians were only called on to serve voluntarily in Auxiliary Corps. As a matter of fact, the undertaking was accepted in the spirit rather than in the letter, although the British Diplomatic Agency went a little beyond Maxwell's bare statement ; Rushdi Pasha, the Prime Minister, was the pink of politeness, but no more, in acknowledging what he seems to have regarded as a *beau geste*, and no sort of expostulation was heard when a few days later a promise proved to be as flexible as a pie-crust and the artillery of the Egyptian Army were *en route* for the Canal.

"Complication has arisen in the situation as a result of Cheetham's interview yesterday. At present I think it wiser not to declare a Protectorate or to depose the Khedive but to declare Martial Law, and allow the civil and religious administration to go on exactly as before, with the exception that any special legislation required will be conveyed to the Prime Minister as an order under Martial Law and on the responsibility of England. In my opinion it is absolutely necessary to avoid, if possible, any chance of a religious war. I believe that Rushdi can carry on and hold the religious heads with us if this course be taken. We can well postpone until later the final arrangements regarding the Khedivate and the Egyptians. I should proclaim Martial Law to-morrow if the above course were adopted." So had run Maxwell's "very secret" telegram to Kitchener on the 1st November.

Martial Law was proclaimed on the morrow, but six weeks were to elapse between the declaration of war by



Turkey and the Government's definition of the future relations between Great Britain and Egypt ; six weeks bristling with difficulty for the man who had always in mind both the steady hold to be kept on Egypt for the sake,<sup>1</sup> and the period, of the war, as also the best methods to be adopted so as to ensure smooth working between the two countries when peace should ensue. Four courses suggested themselves to some members of the Cabinet : annexation, incorporation as a self-governing Dominion within the Empire, complete independence with a treaty of alliance and a continuance of the existing forms of control with Great Britain replacing Turkey in her overlordship. The word annexation<sup>1</sup> struck a discordant note in Maxwell's ears. Neutral countries might be tempted, in review of Liberal promises, to distrust British policy altogether, and, far worse, fierce even if impotent anger might stir all classes of Egyptians ; the more thought he gave to the proposal the more sharply underlined were the protests he lodged against it. In the course of a memorandum to Kitchener he based his plea for a Protectorate : that we had at hand a loyal, intelligent and popular prince in Hussein Kamel, who would make an excellent ruler under our protection (this would obviate Moslem prejudices) ; that the existing Moslems would probably work loyally under Hussein instead of intriguing against us ; that he (Maxwell) was not confident that we had a sufficiently strong and efficient British Civil Administration to take over the government of the country ; that we had no hold whatsoever on the religious administration which would be opposed to us.

The Foreign Office, despite the representations of the official who knew the people of Egypt as the palm of his own hand, plumped for annexation, insisting that such a course would greatly assure our position. "It is hoped you will agree," Kitchener telegraphed on the 14th

<sup>1</sup> There is evidence that at one moment he favoured the idea, but he quickly veered round, and steadily adhered to the alternative of a Protectorate.

November ; Maxwell, on the other hand, still agreed—(and telegraphed bluntly to that effect)—with Cheetham,<sup>1</sup> Graham,<sup>2</sup> and Edward Cecil,<sup>3</sup> that a Protectorate, and nothing more, should be proclaimed at once, adding as a sort of sop that the more drastic procedure might be reserved for future conditions. “Annexation,” he repeated, “would raise many technical and local difficulties, and should only be adopted in the event of Hussein refusing the Sultanate.”

Day in and day out Maxwell was in communication with Hussein Kamel, and that Prince, who was anything but a chip of the old block Ismail, opened his heart and mind to the man he knew to be a true friend. He disclosed to Sir John with perfect simplicity all his difficulties; too clever not to be aware of what was being discussed in the British Cabinet, he said that however reluctant he might be to supplant his nephew, he frankly recognized that such a step would be for the country's good if only the break with Turkey were absolute.

Despite a decree regulating the bestowal of decorations, the Khedive—in addition to deriving certain sums annually from the Wakfs—would recoup himself of many of his speculative losses by selling, at a fancy price, Medjidiehs and Osmaniehhs to quite unworthy purchasers ; Hussein thought that the system under which rewards issued from the Sultan of Turkey should be abolished and Egypt should have its own decorations awarded by its own ruler ; he dreaded having to assume the rôle which would not be much greater than that of an Indian Maharajah and

<sup>1</sup> Sir Milne Cheetham, K.C.M.G., 1915, the Chargé-d’Affaires, remained in Egypt as acting High Commissioner until the 9th January, 1915, when Sir Henry McMahon took up the appointment of High Commissioner.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Ronald Graham, Adviser of the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior, and appointed by Maxwell to act for him—with the rank of Chief Staff Officer—with the Egyptian administrative authorities ; later the Right Hon. Sir Ronald Graham, Ambassador to Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Edward Cecil, 4th son of 3rd Marquis of Salisbury. Financial Adviser in Egypt.

did not conceal his conviction that if he were to serve the British Empire effectively and honourably it must be from a Sovereign's position.

Everything which Hussein said and suggested was reported to Kitchener, who had always viewed him with favour and to whom he owed the post which had brought him no little reputation and earned for him the title of "The Father of the Fellah."

"I represented Hussein's views," Maxwell wrote later, "to Kitchener and he apparently agreed with them. I was fortunate in having all the time the confidence of Lord Kitchener, who notwithstanding the enormous responsibility which affairs in Europe entailed, always managed to find time to take interest in the affairs of Egypt—nothing escaped him—he knew what risks to take, and took them. Few saw as clearly as Lord Kitchener did, the German designs on the East. He saw that it was of paramount importance that the integrity of Egypt should be maintained ; he realized and appreciated the German economic invasion by means of the Baghdad Railway scheme, and had it not been for pressure at home, I know that he saw the necessity, once Turkey declared war against us, to strike at her and Germany, by an attack on her sensitive lines of communication to Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and the Hedjaz." (Maxwell to a friend.)

To trust the man on the spot was an axiom the War Secretary was never tired of airing ; he would be certain that what the four men on the spot did not know about the situation in Egypt was not worth knowing, and there is little doubt but that he added all the weight of his own experience in urging that their counsel should prevail and that a Protectorate should be the order of the day. Anyhow, on the 18th December the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs gave notice that a term had been set to the suzerainty of Turkey, and within twenty-four hours it was known that H.H. Abbas Hilmi Pasha had been deposed and that the dignity with the title of Sultan had been offered to—and accepted by—Prince Hussein



PRINCE ALEXANDER OF BATTENBERG, A.D.C.  
H.H. SULTAN HUSSEIN HARVEY PASHA SIR JOHN MAXWELL  
IN EGYPT, 1915



Kamel<sup>1</sup> Pasha, eldest living Prince of the family of Mehemet Ali.

The contrast between the deposed nephew and the elected uncle has been so often and so sharply drawn as to be a common-place. The ex-Khedive was an unscrupulous potentate whose evil doings seemed only limited by his lack of courage ; he was, almost ostentatiously, as perverse in his politics as he was imprudent in his private life. The new Sultan had led a blameless, and yet most useful, life, aloof from politics, thoughtless of personal advantage, and, if anything, over-disposed to open his own purse for the benefit of any deserving applicant. He could be remembered, if for nothing else, as the first ruler in Egypt to insist that his household, like himself, should be free from stain ; and almost his first authoritative act was to demand the resignation of two high officials of State whose moral record was markedly murky. It is not to be impertinent to suggest that, apart from his piety, his perfectly regulated life and his love of hospitality, Hussein had, in two other respects, something specially in common with the scions of the House of Hanover ; his physical courage was of a kind which suggests total disregard of danger, and his sense that a certain amount of pomp is conducive to popularity was shown in a keen

<sup>1</sup> The King telegraphed to the new Sultan : " Your Highness has been called upon to undertake the responsibilities of your high office at a grave crisis in the national life of Egypt, and I feel convinced that you will be able, with the co-operation of your Ministers and the protectorate of Great Britain, successfully to overcome all the influences which are seeking to destroy the independence of Egypt, and the wealth, liberty and happiness of its people." The Sultan replied to His Majesty : " I present to Your Majesty an expression of my deepest gratitude for the sentiments of friendship with which you have so kindly honoured me, and for the valuable support which assures me of the safety and integrity of the independence of Egypt. Conscious of the responsibilities that I have just assumed, and determined to devote myself entirely to the protectorate and to the progress and welfare of my people, I am glad to be able to rely in this task upon the goodwill of Your Majesty and upon the assistance of your Government. HUSSEIN KAMEL."

appreciation of the possibilities—and niceties—of a rich uniform.<sup>1</sup>

With an Oriental ruler of this sort a British General could—and did—work easily and well ; the innate frankness and honesty of purpose ingrained in both men would serve to break down any racial barriers, and their later correspondence, which death alone was to close, showed that when their official relations ceased, the bond of friendship and affection was drawn tighter still.

<sup>1</sup> Hussein early urged that there should be a new Egyptian flag—a notion on which the Foreign Office frowned unless it was intended to fly the Union Jack, in which case, Maxwell was told, there should be no difficulty. “ They would like a new flag of their own and not the Union Jack,” was the uncompromising reply—and a new flag was secured.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ORGANIZATION FOR DEFENCE

MEANWHILE on the 16th November the Indian troops detailed for the defence of Egypt were at Suez, and the same day Maxwell heard that the Australian and New Zealand contingents would have their war training under his eye. The eventual destination of the Anzars was of course France, but meanwhile they would be available as reserves in Egypt, where their appearance would impress public opinion. Of the "appearance" of the Australians there could be no question ; tall of stature, broad-chested, loose of limb and easy in gait, to many an open-mouthed spectator they appeared as supermen ; but until they had been tamed as well as trained by a leader <sup>1</sup> they quickly learnt to adore, and until their superb gallantry had been tested in face of the enemy, the impression they created was not uniformly favourable. It was said at the time that the self-control of some of these giants was in inverse ratio to their bodily proportion ; the finer the man the less he seemed able to restrain himself.

The Australians, who were to make so magnificent a contribution to the cause, began by being a little above themselves and celebrated the Feast of the Nativity by painting Cairo red. Their splendid physique and indomitable courage were as evident as their lack of discipline ; their officers and N.C.O.'s seemed to have no grip on them, but their behaviour sensibly improved

<sup>1</sup> General Birdwood. Later Field-Marshal Sir William Birdwood, C.-in-C. India.



as the seriousness of the situation began to be burnt into them ; the underlying trouble was that political influence had been brought to bear in the appointment of many officers, who, however willing, were wholly unsuited for the task of using to the highest advantage the splendid material that had been put into their hands.

A few men had to be repatriated, but the remainder, while serving their apprenticeship for the field of battle, where they would give so glorious an account of themselves, anyhow enabled Maxwell to detail the two divisions comprising the Indian Expeditionary Force for the actual defence of the Canal. Thanks to the generous response India leapt to make, the soldier responsible for the Canal defence could count on twenty-four battalions of infantry, a mounted brigade, a camel corps, twelve mountain guns, a detachment of the Royal Flying Corps, besides a squadron of French seaplanes and some artillery from the Egyptian Army. Ismailia stood out to be selected as Headquarters for the defenders, and the line of defence was divided into three sectors, Port Said, Ismailia and Suez. The infantry units were found to be unequal in quality, the Imperial Service contingents, the fine offering of individual princes, being found suitable rather for lines of communication ; nor had they any Signal troops, wireless company or heavy artillery. But they had a most valuable asset in the detachment of the Royal Flying Corps, usefully set to mark the movements of the enemy in Sinai, within 50 miles of the east bank of the Canal, and who had for their fellow the French seaplane squadron which, operating from Port Said, marked the Turkish concentration at El Arish and other frontier towns.

The entrance of Turkey into the field necessitated a change not only in our war policy, but in the control of it ; from the rather unwieldy Cabinet was extracted a War Council on which served only the Ministers directly concerned with the conduct of the War, and at their first meeting on the 25th November, the Near East was the

main theme. The First Lord of the Admiralty argued that the best way to defend Egypt would be to alight on some point of the coast of Asiatic Turkey and advocated an attack on the Gallipoli peninsula, for which, however, the War Office at that time could offer him no military means.

Kitchener had always envisaged an actively hostile Turkey and had taken Maxwell wholly into his confidence in planning his counter-measures ; both were sure that to be really safe in the East was to be strong in the West, and their decision that the Suez Canal was the jugular vein of the British Empire was wholly shared by the German General Staff ; thus when Turkey declared war her domineering ally at once sought to hound her on to Egypt.

The project, which Kitchener had more than once discussed with Maxwell before the War, and to which he steadily adhered, was to effect a landing in the Gulf of Iskanderun at Alexandretta, a short way from the main line of the Baghdad railway—which was joined, near Aleppo, by the Syria-Arabia branch line.

In theory Maxwell wholly agreed, but he was also wholly aware that Kitchener's commitments in the West were large and that resources in men and material were slender.

" If," he therefore wrote on the 4th December, " but only if any diversion is contemplated, I think the safest and most fruitful in results would be one at Alexandretta. There, if we do not impinge on Russian spheres, we strike a vital blow at their railways and also hit German interests very hard. I am assured that round about Alexandretta the Armenians would join any European landing expedition, and that they are all good fighting men, but would want arms and ammunition. An expedition to cut the line at Maan would not produce much result. It would be difficult in regard to water. Any damage done could be easily repaired, and it is too near the Holy Places for our Mohammedan troops. Alexandretta would not want a

very large force. All other places—Rafaa, Jaffa, Acre, Beirut—are too far from the Turkish lines of communications.” But as neither the organized field force nor the necessary transport and equipment for any operation greater than a hit-and-scuttle raid were available, the matter had to rest and Maxwell was told that the passive defence of the Canal, on its own line, was for the moment the only possible method of speaking effectively with any German-fed Turkish invaders.

The sailors, however, thought it was not the moment for them to sit still, and just after Maxwell had penned his letter Admiral Peirse set about harrying Syrian ports so as to hamper the movement of supplies, and the light cruiser *Doris*, after bombing earthworks at El Arish, landed parties not only there and at Sidon but also in the Gulf of Iskanderun, where the bluejackets exultingly blew up bridges, derailed trains and cut telegraph lines ; and at Alexandretta the Turks, under threat of bombardment, were compelled to blow up two locomotives with British guncotton lent for the purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Further exploits had to be discontinued for fear of Turkish reprisals, but Maxwell was definitely asked whether, with the help of the Navy, it would be possible to carry out a landing and strike hard at the Turks ; his telegram in reply was that shallows and choppy sea would render such action very difficult, and that even if accomplished it might be ineffectual as the forces at El Arish <sup>2</sup> consisted chiefly of Bedouin, who would hurry inland with the first sight and sound of British warships.

<sup>1</sup> There was something of burlesque in the occasion as the Torpedo Lieutenant sent ashore to supervise the destruction of the machines was given Turkish rank for the day to preserve Turkish dignity, and eventually the Baghdad Railway Company sued the Turkish Government for malicious damage done by a Turkish officer.

<sup>2</sup> On October 26th El Arish was abandoned and the inhabitants invited to Egypt, but the only response was from Captain Barlow of the Egyptian Army with his servant and the Cadi ; the others seemed to have preferred the Turks.

Before the close of the year the defence of the Suez Canal <sup>1</sup> had been organized and entrusted to the 10th and 11th Indian Divisions and the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade. Only the artillery of the East Lancashire Division was employed as Maxwell was rightly anxious not to interrupt their training, but the troops, as well as the Australian and New Zealand contingents, formed a reserve which could be rapidly railed from Cairo to Ismailia and thence to any point on the Canal. To the two Field Artillery Brigades of the East Lancashire, a pack-gun battery of the Egyptian Army was added, but full confidence was, of course, reposed in the warships, prepared to act as floating batteries, for artillery defence. After considerable discussion, but without any final divergence of opinion, the Canal was divided into three sectors: Suez to Bitter Lakes; Deversoir, north of the Great Bitter Lake, to El Ferdan; El Ferdan to Port Said. The headquarters of the force were at Ismailia and small detachments were set to guard the Sweet Water Canal and garrison the supply depot, of vital importance, at Zagazig.

It had always been understood that any Turkish attack directed from Palestine would be met and fought upon the line of the Canal, and the pre-War scheme of defence definitely laid down that "the obvious line of actual defence of the eastern frontier of Egypt is the Suez Canal."

The prescription was all the stronger now that warships were detailed, in the event of an attack from Sinai, to enter the Canal, and assist in its defence by gunfire and thus naturally strengthen the position. No calculation could, however, blink the mischief which would ensue from any interruption of navigation through the Canal, and the still greater advantage to the enemy which would

<sup>1</sup> One step had already been taken late in August under orders of Byng to whom the Sirdar had confided all troops in Egypt. As a precautionary measure, the Egyptian Camel Corps was ordered to the Canal, but under instructions that only in the case of a raid were the troops to leave the banks; as the appearance of any British troops on the Sinai peninsula might agitate Constantinople when the atmosphere was already sultry.

arise if a ship were sunk in it ; and it was indeed a tribute to the organization that even when the Turks struck their blow, traffic on the Canal was only suspended for a few nights before, and during the morning hours of, the 3rd February, and their communications with the East were not otherwise disturbed by the attack.

The defence work put in hand along the Canal was simple compared to the system devised in 1916 ; a series of posts was dug, the trenches revetted with sandbags and protected by barbed wire on the east bank chiefly to cover ferries and facilitate local counter-attack, while a more extensive bridge-head was prepared at Ismailia ferry post ; on the west bank trenches were dug at intervals between the posts. Of the three floating bridges, the heaviest was at Ismailia, with lighter ones at Kubri, half-way between Suez and the Little Bitter Lake, while early in November, Maxwell directed a cutting to be made in the sandbank at Port Said so as to narrow, by flooding a portion of this desert, a vulnerable front.

The construction of the Suez Canal defences was rendered the more difficult owing to the shortage of Engineer units, and when the bulk of the work was in hand, only two field companies were available, and for about ten days in the middle of January only one ; and this for two divisions defending a front of 95 miles. There were no Engineer officers available as C.R.E. nor any Field Engineers, save a single officer, Captain R. E. M. Russell, lent by the Egyptian Army, who was attached to the headquarters of the General Officer Commanding Canal Defences. But neither Maxwell nor his immediate subordinates were workmen to be vocal in complaint of their tools, or the lack of them ; appeal was made to the State Railways and Telegraph Departments for the services of such of their officials as were ex-Royal Engineer officers, and their functionaries without hesitation sprang to laborious duties which under normal conditions would have been carried out by Engineer units of the force in Egypt.

Meanwhile in Jerusalem it had been carefully discussed how best to cross the Sinai Desert between the frontier and the Suez Canal. The expedition had for some weeks been decided upon and it was a question which of three paths should be taken ; the northern through El Arish to Kantara, the central through Hasana to Ismailia, and the southern through Nakhl to Suez. The Turkish leader, Jemal Pasha, who had been moved from the Ministry of Marine to be Commander-in-Chief in the Palestine area, pondered awhile over the matter and then distinctly declared his preference for the second of these, rejecting the northern road for the not well-established reason that the line of advance might be hampered by bombardment from the sea. A five-years-old War Office estimate had been taken from its shelf, dusted and forwarded to inform Maxwell that 5,000 men and 2,000 camels would be the largest Turkish force possible to propel across the central route, and to remind him that the main difficulty an expeditionary force must reckon with would be one of water, intensified in summer by extreme heat and in winter by violent sandstorms. But circumstance was now to favour the Turks ; in the winter of 1914, storms of rain, only recurring as a rule every seven years, fell ; the usually empty rock cisterns were filled up and when the march actually took place the troops seemed to have suffered rather from cold than thirst. In the back of Jemal's mind was probably the consideration that the middle road alone contained the element of surprise : news had reached him of the obvious lack of training in the British troops in Egypt ; camp gossip had gone so far as to suggest that they were composed of third-rate material and were addicted to football rather than drill ; the Indian force might not, especially if taken unawares, put up too stout and stubborn a resistance ; if his troops could get in striking distance of the point of attack before their coming advent was known, the Defence might be caught napping, and there would be realized his desire—which he had not concealed—to enter

Cairo at the head of a victorious army and demand from the British General the surrender of his sword. Jemal's strategy was further reinforced by the notion with which he nourished his brain, that Egypt would rise, as one man, in revolt when the first Turkish soldier should place his foot on the bank of the Canal ; he based his conviction rather loosely on the admitted hostility in certain Egyptian quarters toward the British occupation, but the stories of pro-Turkish sentiment in Cairo and Alexandria had been grossly exaggerated and bitter was his disappointment when, at the critical moment, no finger was raised to favour the invasion, or frustrate the Defence. For the immediate control of the latter Maxwell had detailed Major-General A. Wilson, a recent arrival from India, with Brigadier-General A. Bingley as his Chief Staff Officer.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ATTACK ON THE CANAL

WITH the New Year Egypt strained her eyes and ears Palestine-wards and every scrap of information that could be secured was carefully sifted.

The British aeroplanes available could not undertake long flights ; the French seaplanes, put at Maxwell's disposal, were better, and if not powerful enough for the work they were called upon to perform, gave valuable reports which made it clear that an attack was imminent, and that a large enemy force, including the 10th, 23rd, and 27th Divisions, was massed near the frontier about Bir Saba. Sir John then thought well to issue to the Egyptians a communiqué announcing that an attack was sure to take place in the near future, so as to discount undue excitement and as far as possible allay anxiety. The birthdays of the Kaiser and Mohammed coincide—irreverent persons in Cairo would murmur about the Beast and the False Prophet—and it was thought the day might possibly be selected for a demonstration, but nothing of the sort took place.

The trenches prepared on the west bank were only lightly held until the 26th January. It was then reported that Moiya Harab, 25 miles east of Little Bitter Lake, was occupied by some 6,000 men, and as the British covering troops exchanged fire that day in front of Kantara with an enemy—who at once gave ground—it was decided to take the positions for the defence ; two battalions of the 32nd Indian Brigade were sent into the trenches along



the west bank from Bench Mark Post to Ballah ; all along the front the trenches on the west bank were reinforced from local reserves. The New Zealand Infantry Brigade was despatched the same day from Cairo to the scene of prospective action while four of His Majesty's ships and an armed merchant cruiser entered the Canal, the French coastguard ship *Requin* being already in Lake Timsah. The next day the enemy was astride the El Arish-Kantara Road, 5 miles east of Kantara, but his feints were taken at their proper value and did nothing to shake opinion as to where his main attack would be. On the 28th, aeroplanes located some three or four thousand Turks 8 miles east of Deversoir and two days later the enemy closed in, concentrating generally about 9 miles east of the Canal at Serapeum and making no further effort to conceal his hand.

The assault on the Canal could now be hourly expected ; up to the margin of his means Maxwell had diligently prepared for it <sup>1</sup> and he could await any emergency without any special anxiety.

The first exchange of shots had taken place on the 26th January, when patrols opened fire on the picket lines at Kantara and El Kubi ; a rather obvious feint to induce the defenders of the Canal to reinforce the northern and southern sectors. But neither Sir John nor any of his subordinates were deceived and on the 27th the ships of war detailed to assist the Defence Forces had steamed to their allotted posts ; <sup>2</sup> the Canal Company withdrew craft and plant to Port Said ; maritime traffic through the Canal was stopped.

On the 29th Maxwell's well-based hypotheses had become a certainty ; the main assault was going to be

<sup>1</sup> Already in October he had warned the War Office. "Threat to our frontier daily more patent, all is being prepared along the Canal—fortified posts at Kantara, near Ismailia and near Suez on east bank."

<sup>2</sup> The *Swiftsure* was at Kantara, the *Clio* at El Ferdan, the *Ocean* at El Shatt, the *Himalaya* at Geneffe, the *Minervé* at Shallufa, and the *Proserpine* at Port Said ; the two French ships were in the Great Bitter Lake and Lake Timsah.

delivered at some point not remote from Ismailia and our centre sector was appropriately strengthened. The next two days were void of incident, while the Turkish column which had demonstrated before Kantara turned southwards and after a feeble attack on Ferdan joined up with the main body to the south-east of Ismailia.

The enemy's strength and position were thus reported : Opposite Kantara (30 miles east of Port Said) 2,000 rifles, machine-guns and light desert artillery. At Bir El Mahada (12 miles N.E. of Ferdan) 7,000 rifles and one mountain battery, and between Moiya El Harab (25 miles E.S.E. of Tussum) and Kataib El Kheil (12 miles E.N.E. of Tussum) 8,000 rifles and two heavy guns 6 inches in calibre. In the rear of the last party were established reserves of 4,000 rifles and some mountain guns.

Throughout the 2nd February from Deversoir to El Ferdan light but constant touch was kept with the Turks, while a high wind whipped up the sand in the eyes and teeth of the Indian troops and brought about conditions which forbade aerial reconnaissance ; that evening the enemy entrenchments were about two and a half miles south-east of the British defences, although the central sector was the object of menace, it was not quite certain whether the brunt of the attack would be directed north or south of Lake Timsah, but the enemy had been so busy in front of El Ferdan that it was thought well to strengthen this point by an armoured train with four platoons of New Zealand Infantry and two platoons to support the 5th Gurkhas in their post on the east bank. In that part of the sector between the Great Bitter Lake and Lake Timsah troops were thus disposed :

19th Lancashire Battery, Royal Field Artillery (T)  
(four 15-pdrs.).

5th Battalion Egyptian Artillery (four mountain guns  
and two maxims).

1st Field Company, East Lancashire Royal Engineers  
(T) (two sections).

22nd Indian Infantry Brigade, less 3rd Brahmans (62nd and 92nd Punjabis, 2/10th Gurkha Rifles).

2nd Q.V.O. Rajputs.

Two Platoons ; 120th Pioneers (escort to Egyptian battery).

137th (Indian) Field Ambulance.

The fight of the 3rd February, for the conduct of which Maxwell of course gave Wilson a free hand, proved to be no more than a one-day's wonder. Before dawn, Turkish storming parties, a bridging unit, and a party of sappers crept up to a point due south of the land station of Tussum, and helped by the folds of the ground, the sappers easily launched the 20 pontoons and 6 rafts they had carried from Constantinople to the Canal, and the infantry proceeded to ferry themselves across. But our people on the west bank were wide awake ; a sharp fire was at once advanced on the invaders and it only needed daylight to see that the storm troops had rather miserably failed. One or two pontoons did actually reach the bank, but their passengers had scarcely scrambled out before they were summarily dealt with ; the other pontoons and all the rafts had been sunk in mid-stream.

Jemal then set afoot the second phase of the engagement ; his 22nd Division made a feint attack, north of the Tussum-Serapeum line, which the 25th Division was ordered to assault. The Artillery fire of the 23rd Division unhappily accounted for H.M.S. *Harding*, which, badly hit by more than one shell, had to take refuge in Lake Timsah ; the *Requin* was more fortunate, as, although struck, her Commander was able almost at once to locate and silence the offensive battery. Meanwhile, every effort to dislodge the defenders of the Tussum line failed conspicuously, and the Indian garrison delivered so sharp a counter-attack, that in their withdrawal, the Turks were caught by cross-fire from the two French ships.

The ruse of demonstrating in front of Kantara and

El Ferdan had been repeated, while the main work was being directed to force a passage at Serapeum and Tussum, but the Commanders of the two points were neither beguiled nor frightened into an appeal for help, which might weaken the centre ; and as the day wore on the arduous weather conditions affected the Turk assailant even more than the Indian defender ; the modest sand-storm of the previous day had so increased in fury that units advancing across the desert could keep neither touch nor direction ; Jemal, that day, in the early afternoon, threw in his hand and beat a retreat, but so skilfully that only 7 officers and 280 other ranks remained that day prisoners of war in our hands.

Reinforcements of the 31st Indian Brigade arrived at Serapeum in the afternoon, but although their services were not then required, Maxwell gave orders they should be detained in close support, and to provide against a further attack on the morrow ; the front at Ismailia was also strengthened by the despatch of the 2nd Australian Brigade and a couple of battalions of Australian infantry, while H.M.S. *Swift* took up her station in Lake Timsah. But the Turkish command had conferred and racial reasons were apparently not unconcerned with strategy in deciding on a retirement to Bir Saba. Early on the morning of the 4th, the Mounted Brigade crossed the Canal to discover the enemy's dispositions, but could return with the news that the bulk of the Turkish force had disappeared.<sup>1</sup> A few snipers had been left, south of Tussum post, and two companies of the 92nd Punjabis, under Captain Cochran, were sent out to deal with them ; it

<sup>1</sup> It is possible to think that Cromer, Kitchener and Maxwell owed some of their success in dealing with Egyptians to an innate sense of humour. Just when the Turkish attack was being beaten off, an important personage in Cairo tried to spread the news that the enemy had occupied Ismailia ; he was arrested, but instead of being condemned to severe penalties, Maxwell ordered him to go under escort to Ismailia, and see the truth for himself ; the one condition being that if he found the report untrue, he should pay the return fare for himself and his escort. He went, he saw, he paid.

was then discovered that a tolerably large number of Turks were still entrenched and two other companies of Punjabis and the 128th Pioneers, under Major Maclachlan, were despatched by Brigadier-General Geoghegan to assist their comrades in turning them out. There was a brisk fight of about an hour, but just as the British detachment was about to charge, the enemy surrendered with a loss of 6 officers and 292 men captured, besides 59 dead, among them being the German staff officers who had supervised the crossing.

Jemal Pasha could boast neither strategical nor tactical nor diplomatic success. The British line was unbroken and had bled but little ; the Canal was undamaged and the Egyptian population was unmoved. The Turkish Commander had aimed too high and had over-stretched himself ; a less rash and less vainglorious commander might have succeeded in blocking the Suez Canal and in so doing might have done us infinite mischief. So foolhardy was the attempt to invade Egypt with 20,000 rifles that it is within just surmise, Jemal had been encouraged, if indirectly, from Berlin. Although Liman von Sanders had been open-mouthed that to advance on Egypt with a slender force was to court disaster, there were notoriously politicians in Berlin who thought that any success on the Suez Canal would be well worth the sacrifice of a few thousand Turkish soldiers, and the story was current that the German diplomatic representative had whispered into Jemal's ear that Egypt would be more gladly accepted by the Kaiser than the keys of Ismailia.

The military historian, von Kressenstein,<sup>1</sup> in a graphic review of the Turkish operations, is sure that to the weather and not to the skill or strength of the defenders was due the failure to seize the objective ; the Turks might of course flatter themselves for a while that the ease with which they crossed the Sinai desert would induce the officer responsible for the safety of Egypt to beg for British troops urgently required elsewhere. But if so they greatly

<sup>1</sup> Krees von Kressenstein was German Military Adviser in Palestine.

misread Sir John Maxwell, and even in the light of subsequent operations, it is difficult to follow von Kressenstein's arguments that the losses incurred in the campaign were more than justified. While our own casualties were trifling, those of the enemy reached a total of 1,250 ; and if boasts were true that the Corps reached the Canal without the loss of a man or an animal, it is at least equally true that nearly 7,000 camels perished in the retreat.

The question was of course to be asked, and for a while to be rather fretfully repeated at intervals,<sup>1</sup> why the Defence undertook no sustained counter-attack or prolonged pursuit ; and Maxwell<sup>1</sup> was not to be immune from reproach on the score of allowing the Turkish Expeditionary Force to escape without heavier loss than was inflicted. Not for a moment would he shelter himself under the authoritative mandate he had early received that he was not to risk a reverse which might have far-sounding echoes and far-reaching results ; unless some exceptional circumstance suddenly presented itself, he had been advised from home only to attempt local counter-attacks, followed up by pursuit but only to a distance of 10 miles.

The factors which immediately determined him to leave well alone were that he had neither the force to propel in pursuit nor the water transport with which to equip them. Had an extensive offensive policy been contemplated, camel or donkey transport might have been organized, but as it was—except for the pack animals for water carriage in the first-line transport of the Indian units—Maxwell's range of action was the range of a soldier's water-bottle ; and although the ration strength of troops in Egypt was 70,000, only the Indian Infantry Brigades,

<sup>1</sup> He asked if he might reply to one journal which had gone out of its way to attack him. The reply was, " Lord K. is most anxious you should not reply to the Editor and begs you will mark him as an example of patience under persecution analogous to yours. Do you remember one of Ouida's heroes speaks of 'wasting powder on vermin' ? The remark is surely applicable here."

and not all of them, were in any sense thoroughly trained, and Sir John was a soldier fully to endorse Kitchener's dictum that to put untrained troops into the field was to commit an act of murder.<sup>1</sup>

General Wilson had to his hand in the shape of mounted troops the Imperial Service Brigade and some companies of the Bikanir Camel Corps, most of whom he distributed among the three sectors of defence, the remainder being held near the bridge over which the cavalry reconnaissance was made at dawn on the 4th ; as soon as the fight began Maxwell moved some Yeomanry Squadrons by train from Cairo to Ismailia, but these—also from lack of training and equipment—were calculated to stiffen, if required, the Defence rather than to engage in any far-flung forward movement.

There was also to be considered the uncertainty as to the numbers and intentions of the enemy. Not till mid-February was definite news forthcoming that the troops which might well be supposed to be in reserve had not left Bir Saba. Even French seaplanes have their limitations and these for a fortnight had been flying from dawn to dusk ; it was no wonder that owing to mechanical trouble their attempt at the critical moment to reconnoitre Bir Saba failed and that a precious scrap of information was denied to British Intelligence.

The defeat of the enemy—apart from his casualties—was damaging in high degree. He had staked much on the enterprise and had lost his wager. Just as the apparently insignificant fight at Toski had been infinitely detrimental to the Dervish, so a quarter of a century later the repulse from Tussum effected by troops whom the Turks held in low esteem was to deal a very ugly blow to Turkish prestige.

"We gave them a nasty knock," Maxwell wrote on February 15th, "killing and wounding a great many more than I have reported, for every day bodies in hastily-dug

<sup>1</sup> This was the argument used by Kitchener when Joffre late in 1914 urged him to send units of the New Armies to France at once.

graves are discovered ; also many more were drowned in the Canal than we knew of. Yet they got away with their guns in fairly good order. As we knew that there was the Eighth Corps and part of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Corps against us, and they only showed about 20,000 men, I did not think it safe to go out and meet them, for it was quite possible they were laying a trap for us, and I felt anything in the nature of a reverse, or even a check, would have fatal results in Egypt, for there is no doubt that the feeling here is pro-Turk and anti-British. It is odd, but nothing that we do or say is believed, whereas every Turkish or German lie is sucked in.

“ It is satisfactory that our Moslems, both Indian and Egyptian, showed no disinclination to kill their co-religionists when they had the chance.”



## CHAPTER XVIII

### MINOR OPERATIONS

FOR a month or more Egypt was to enjoy something like quiet, and the Yeomanry with the Australian and New Zealand Infantry could return from their brief experience of active service to resume their training. A small force of Irregulars which was threatening the village of Tor, near the toe of the Sinai peninsula, was summarily dealt with by half a battalion of the 2/7th Gurkhas and a handful of the 2nd Egyptian Battalion and comfortable information was to hand that the Turkish troops were demoralized by their defeat, jaded by their return march and beginning to say rude things to the German officers. But the threat of the Suez Canal still remained and the report of 30,000 troops still in the neighbourhood of Bir Saba and the discovery by the French plane of 250 tents at Nakhel and some 200 regular troops hovering about Bir Hassana caused Maxwell to cable to Kitchener that another attack might be looked for later on.

Through the spring and early summer Maxwell had to turn his head again and again to the minor operations which the Turk was carrying out in Sinai with the obvious intention of pinning as many British troops as possible to Egypt. The Turks might indeed have doubled their troops at Bir Saba or extended their railway in that quarter without the news trickling through for many days, Sir John's vision in this direction being dimmed as with the departure of the British naval forces from the Canal,

his faithful seaplane carrier *Aenne Rickmers*, re-christened *Anne*, had been lost to him.

Admiral Peirse had scarcely left Egypt before there came the order to send six French seaplanes to the Dardanelles, "keeping three in Egypt." Sir Ian Hamilton in his brilliantly-written book condoled with himself that Maxwell had not sent him the Gurkha Brigade with which to take Achi Baba ; Maxwell's retort courteous to this was that the brigade had not been sent for the reason that no Gurkha Brigade was in his command. His reply to Whitehall's demands for six seaplanes was that there had never been more than seven French seaplanes, of which two had been lost, three had gone—the long-suffering *Anne* was to be badly mauled by a Turkish torpedo-boat—to the Gulf of Smyrna, and two, with another prize the *Rabenfels* (now the *Raven*), were off Gaza waiting to fly over Lydda.

On the 22nd March a patrol of the 56th Rifles which was returning to its post, north of El Kubri, was first fired on and then attacked by a large party with fixed bayonets, and it was greatly to the credit of the patrol leader that he was able to bring back seven of his nine men in spite of the attempts to surround his little party. Detachments were sent out from the Gurkha post and the Turkish force, largely mounted on camels and mules, fell back.

Maxwell did not conceal from himself that the situation gave cause for anxiety, as the 4,000 Turkish troops with guns, at Nakhil, might well be the advanced guard thrown out by a large force and another attack on the Canal might be imminent.

At daybreak on the 23rd a column moved out from El Kubri and after a nine-mile march the infantry backed by the 1/5th Lancashire battery assaulted the position, putting the Turks to flight with fifty casualties. The assault was well delivered but a little belated as, owing to the roughness of the previous night, the pontoon bridge, moored along the west bank at Kubri, could not be safely

used and the troops had to be laboriously ferried across. The enemy's immediate intentions were, however, not yet clear, perhaps not even to himself, but his scouts and patrols remained in the Suez sector of the Canal and a heavy fall of rain in Sinai facilitated his movements but was insufficient to maintain the inundated area, already largely reduced, as a barrier.

The first fortnight of April was marked by two ugly events : the attempted assassination of the Sultan of Egypt—an attempt to be repeated two months later—and the discovery of a mine in the Canal. A hostile patrol was seen near Kantara early on the 8th, and later in the day, tracks were found which Sir John ordered to be patiently followed. After a trudge of fifteen miles through the sand, a large packing-case was found, the Canal was dragged and the mine brought up, several ships having meanwhile passed over the spot.

On the 28th April, a patrol of 100 men of the Bikanir Camel Corps stumbled upon a body of about 300 Turks and Bedouin twelve miles east of Ismailia, but Maxwell had now three serviceable seaplanes at Port Said, and the enemy's camp having been located at Hawawish, thirteen miles east of the Canal, General Watson led out a column to try and effect a surprise. The Turkish force, however, had moved off in the dark, but being spotted by an aeroplane at dawn, Watson tried again to come to terms with a very slippery body, but only succeeded in killing some forty Turks and learning, incidentally, that the main body were equipped with mountain guns and a machine-gun.

After a month's respite the enemy was to be spoken with again on the 2nd June when, the Kantara outposts having been shelled at long range, a small mixed force was sent out but only, as usual, to see the dust flying from Turkish heels. By now, Sir Ian Hamilton's pressure on Turkey was to remove, anyhow for the moment, the threat of any offensive against the Canal.

## CHAPTER XIX

### GALLIPOLI

IN the second week in February Kitchener, who had hitherto been obliged to decline any military undertakings outside France, told the Cabinet that if at a later stage the Navy should still plead for help from the soldiers such help would be forthcoming ; he clearly had in mind the employment of Maxwell's surplus troops—especially Birdwood's Anzacs—and he remembered that while we were hammering at the western gate of Constantinople, Turkey would be too busy to have any designs on Egypt.

On the 20th February the Secretary of State telegraphed to Maxwell that in order to lend a hand to the Fleet a force was being concentrated in Lemnos Island. “ You should, however, communicate with the Navy through Admiral Carden, commanding at the Dardanelles, as he may require a considerable force before that date, so that you may be able to send him what he most requires.”

As time might be the essence of success, further instructions were sent not to wait for transports from England but to snatch any transports available and send units to Lemnos as called for.

Maxwell replied on the 23rd that he had at once told Carden he would send off at very short notice a mixed brigade of infantry, artillery, and engineers and had asked in what order they should come and whether he might have some plan of disembarkation. So opened a chapter to be crowded with happenings and for the next nine months the requirements, the difficulties and, up to the

last, the possibilities of the Gallipoli campaign were to absorb Maxwell's thoughts and go near to draining his resources.

On February the 24th Sir John wired that according to his information "the Turks could easily concentrate 40,000 men west and 30,000 east of the Straits, and that the peninsula was so prepared for defence as to be practically a fortress ; to advance against it from any quarter without heavy guns must be highly hazardous." Four days later he wrote :

"I am very much in the dark as to the intentions and objects of the Fleet in forcing the Dardanelles, and await Birdwood's report with great interest. As I write I hear the Fleet have forced the entrance, but they have the difficult part before them. There are seven lines of mines, the great part worked by electricity from the shore ; the first line is just south of Kilid Bahr-Chanak, the entrance to the Narrows. This minefield is well protected by a series of strong forts on both sides of the Straits. There are also two mine-laying boats at Nagara whose mission is to let loose mines to float down with the current. The Admiralty seem to me to be over-sanguine as to the capacity of the Fleet to force the passage without an expeditionary force. The Gallipoli peninsula is very strongly organized for defence—all the bays on the northern littoral are defended, and from Maitos to Gallipoli is an entrenched fort. Apparently there are any number of 15-cm. howitzers in prepared positions."

Kitchener still regarded any landing on the peninsula as subsidiary to the action of the Fleet and on the 24th telegraphed to this effect to Maxwell as also that it would not be, he was sure, a sound military undertaking to attempt any landing in force where the garrison was reported to be 40,000 strong, until the Navy had reduced the forts and forced the passage of the Narrows.

"The entrance of the Fleet," he added, "into the Sea of Marmora would probably render the Turkish position in the peninsula untenable, and would enable a force to

occupy the forts if necessary ; but to land 10,000 men in face of 40,000 Turks while the naval operation is still incomplete seems extremely hazardous. If it can be carried out without seriously compromising the troops landed, there would be no objection to the employment of a military force to secure hold of the forts or positions already dominated by naval fire, so as to prevent re-occupation or repair by the enemy."

Even on the 4th March the War Secretary could tell Sir John that troops would only be used if the Navy could not silence the guns without their co-operation, and that the concentration at the entrance to the Dardanelles was rather in view of subsequent operations in the neighbourhood of Constantinople.

From first to last a landing on the peninsula found little favour with Maxwell ; Hussein had warned him that a sharp check would have serious consequences and would weld together all parties in Turkey. But a good soldier need not personally approve an undertaking to give loyal support to it, and on the 8th March Maxwell wrote cheerfully to Fitzgerald that things were going fairly well with him, but that there were still a few thousand Turks in the peninsula of Nekh Laguma, that the T.F. were good and should be given an early chance and that they could be replaced with practically trained men.

"I have great difficulty," he went on, "in getting information—we get men in, but they never seem to come out ! Our aircraft, too, work hard, but their range is not far enough for our purpose. Birdwood is very fit and well and keen on his job. He will have an interesting time, but who is co-ordinating and directing this great combine ? It will want very careful management and we, the French and the Russians ought to be exactly timed.

"The Fleet are very sanguine, I think far too much so. It is quite on the cards that they will have no great difficulty with the coast defence guns and batteries, but to deal with movable armaments is another question. I am

all for leaving the Gallipoli peninsula severely alone—let it be full of Turks and Germans and bottle them in by getting hold of the Bulair lines. There are practically no roads, no supplies, no water and no inhabitants anywhere that our troops are likely to operate, therefore all has to be carried. This points to pack, but we are all organized for wheel and have no train.”

On the other hand he could report that it was “all bluff about Turkish preparations in Sinai. They are short of coal, they are badly off for aircraft, and rain pools within 20 miles of the Canal are drained.”

As this letter was being penned Sir Ian Hamilton was being told that he had been appointed to command the Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces and that besides the Royal Naval Division, there would be in arms against Turkey the Anzac Corps,<sup>1</sup> the 29th Division, a French Division and a Russian Army Corps, the last of which never materialized; on March 18th the Fleet finally attempted to force the Dardanelles unaided and failed with the loss of one French and two British battleships.

Whilst Hamilton was on the high seas Maxwell suggested to Kitchener that Lemnos was anything but an ideal base and that he had taken it upon himself to move troops out of Alexandria to make room for the new Expeditionary Force and also that Port Said had been rendered available for any requirements.

Hamilton on his arrival at once endorsed Maxwell's view that Lemnos could neither give the accommodation nor the technical facilities required for a large force, the more so as in view of a military landing in face of the enemy a good deal of packing and re-packing of men and materials on board the transports would be necessary. It was decided, *nem. con.*, that the troops should exchange Ægean for Egyptian bases, and Sir John's prevision and careful, if rather stealthy, preparations were to be wholly justified.

<sup>1</sup> Agreeably with his own suggestion Maxwell had already put the 3rd Australian Brigade under orders,

The Royal Naval Division arrived at Port Said on the 27th March, and two days later General d'Amade with the first contingent of the French Division and leading echelon of the 29th Division were stepping ashore at Alexandria.

The situation now became a little complicated and, but for the willingness to cut a good deal of red-tape, might have given rise to trouble just when the smooth and swift working of a machine was indispensable. The base of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force was by common consent established in Egypt; in other words, a considerable portion of Sir Ian Hamilton's command was in a country under the military control of Sir John Maxwell. Moreover, as Kitchener would very soon be begging Maxwell to let Hamilton have everybody and everything he could possibly spare, the M.E.F. would draw freely on the garrison of Egypt, Hamilton's demands being only limited by the bare requirements for the safety of the country. A minor difficulty might have been, but never was, found in that the Australian bases and depots were under the direct charge of General Birdwood as representative of the Commonwealth Government; nor did the force in Egypt murmur audibly even when finding itself encumbered with the care of large numbers of animals and field equipment not wanted in Gallipoli.

Calls on the garrison were to follow quickly on one another and requisitioning for local produce and stores<sup>1</sup> of all kinds by the M.E.F. was continuous. As the force in Egypt had to make its own purchases and knew the markets, and as the operations of two purchasing agencies would have led to confusion and extravagance, Maxwell set up a Resources Board on which sat representatives of the civil and military authorities who were able to mobilize the resources of the country and buy at fair prices.

<sup>1</sup> Much of the drinking water for the peninsula was sent from Alexandria in clean oil tankers, while tens of thousands of tins were made in Egypt to be filled and sealed for the carriage of water to the troops in the trenches.



The embarkation of troops, the disembarkation of sick and wounded—with the provision of hospitals for them—also fell upon the Egyptian Command, and as the weeks went on there rested on Maxwell much of the onus of a War Office conducting a campaign ; the goodwill and devotion to duty of the Staffs did much to allay, although at first they could not remove, the inconveniences of the situation.

“ The trouble with the Staff and Base of M.E.F., ” Maxwell was constrained to murmur, “ is that they make a muddle by doing things on their own without consulting me, especially in the orders they give to Transports. ”

If men are to fight well they must be well cared for, was an axiom with a very human general officer, and with summer coming on something had to be done to protect the troops against the scorching sun, to provide them with many things which could scarcely be described as luxuries, and especially to furnish them with better cover than the fly-tents which had been their winter shelter. And with a garrison which was fluctuating and various in colour and creed, military police had also to be busy now and again. “ There was rather a bad riot the other night, ” Maxwell wrote to Fitzgerald on the 5th April, “ in that street just beyond Shephard’s, where all the whores live. I can’t quite discover the reason of the outbreak ; it was confined entirely to the soldiers, the civil population wisely kept out of it. It appears that some soldiers wanted to pay off old scores with a lady who had sent them to hospital, and that in so doing one of them got hit or stabbed, and covered with blood which excited the rest, so they set to work to wreck the establishment, pulling out all the furniture, etc., piling it up in the street, and setting fire to it, and also the house. The Military Police and picket tried to stop them, but by this time a huge crowd of soldiers had collected, not a few being drunk, and set upon the police and pickets. The former drew their pistols and fired, mostly in the air ; this further excited the crowd, and one or two Aus-

tralian<sup>1</sup> drew Brownings and retaliated. For a time things looked very ugly, as the soldiers attacked and looted other shops and brothels, but a strong picket and a squadron of Yeomanry appeared on the scene, and very soon normal conditions were restored. Four men were wounded, but none dangerously, with pistols, and some six or eight were knocked about ; I wonder we have not had more of these rows. I cleared out 500 venereals to Malta ; Methuen<sup>2</sup> did not appreciate the compliment, but I was getting badly blocked, and these cases were not doing well under canvas.

“ The Australians and New Zealanders are just about fed up with Egyptian sand and training ; the real thing will do them all the good in the world ; they are, I believe, fine fighters and shoot straight, the only question being whether their officers are good enough to keep them in hand.”

<sup>1</sup> “ The Australians had another break-out last Saturday. They set fire to several houses and did thousands of pounds’ worth of damage.” (Maxwell to Fitzgerald, August 7th.)

<sup>2</sup> Field-Marshal Lord Methuen, Gov. and C.-in-C., Malta.

## CHAPTER XX

### HOSPITALS

ON April 6th Kitchener wired to Maxwell that he was to supply any troops that could possibly be spared, or even selected officers and men, who might be wanted for Gallipoli, and comforted by this telegram Hamilton returned to his advanced base at Mudros to prepare for the already deferred landing.

"Hamilton's force is embarking as hard as it can," Maxwell sent word on the 11th April; "the Australians, 29th Division, French, and Naval Division, at Port Said are practically off; New Zealanders are beginning to go to-day. Alexandria harbour was so full of transport, it was almost impossible for ships to move.

"I have let Hamilton have Cox's brigade, and a brigade of Mountain Artillery, also some officers and much material he asked for.

"D'Amade—who has much aged—has asked for, and got, 200 horses, of which 150 are Artillery. I am helping the French all I can with their hospital arrangements, which are very difficult. Sixty of the 'Légion Étrangère' (mostly Italians) deserted; I hope we will be able to catch them.

"As soon as I am clear of Hamilton's and Birdwood's force, I will rearrange things, and prepare for hot weather. I will have to incur considerable expense, but it is necessary. The Mounted Division I intend to keep at Alexandria; one Territorial Division will go to Port Said to replace Cox and this will relieve me not a little so far as Cairo is concerned.

“The Turks are up to some devilment on the Canal ; I expect they will pop a mine or two into it. It is hard to prevent, but we will do our best. I am happier now, for I have succeeded in getting some efficient seaplanes out of the French, so that I will now be able to worry the Turks a lot. I don't like this advanced post at El Sirr ; they are pushing on their railway, but it will be months before that enters into the problem, and by that time the fate of Constantinople will be settled one way or the other.

“There is a good deal more in this conspiracy to undermine the loyalty of our Indian troops than we know of ; I have got agents from C.I.D. India working here and we find ramifications all over the East, in British Columbia and California. There is no doubt Singapore was got at.

“I don't think the attempt on the Sultan has much significance ; the perpetrator, a Moslem of bad antecedents, may have been instigated to do it by the undercurrent of disloyalty he may have heard expressed, but we can find nothing to connect him with any plot or secret society. There is no doubt he had been thinking of doing this for some time. His bullet only missed Hussein by three inches ; the latter behaved very well and took it quite the right way. I hope this will make him more popular. I am going to try his assailant by a Military Court ; this of course with M'Mahon's full approval. We don't want all the nonsense of a civil court dragging on for months.

“One weary Territorial asked another, ‘When do you think we will be sent to France?’ and he was answered, ‘When the Sphinx pups.’”

Hamilton had everything ready by the 23rd, though owing to exceptionally rough weather a further delay of two days was imposed on him ; on the 25th April he could telegraph :

“Thanks to God, who calmed the seas, and the Royal Navy who rowed our fellows ashore as coolly as if at a regatta, thanks also to the dauntless spirit shown by all

ranks of both Services, we have landed 29,000 in the face of desperate resistance from strong Turkish Infantry forces well backed by artillery."

Maxwell at once telegraphed his whole-hearted congratulations on Hamilton's initial success with the promise that he would hurry up reinforcements and had already sent off 3,500 Australians and most of the East Lancashire Division with "quite a useful lot of officers."

But the first battle of Krithia on the 28th was to give unhappy proof that the peninsula was not going to be rushed ; the second battle which ended on the 8th May ended much where it began, although some of the Australians in the first rush got very nearly across to Maidos ; with his fearful casualties and exhausted troops Hamilton might indeed be thankful that he could replace the whole of the front line with the East Lancashires,<sup>1</sup> who were found to be trained to the hour.

Sir Ian now asked for an additional Army Corps from England, and the respective champions of the Eastern and Western theatres pleaded their causes strenuously, Sir John French crying out for every available man in view of Joffre's contemplated summer offensive. With something like fine recklessness Maxwell suggested that the Australian Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles should be sent to Gallipoli as infantry ; his powers of persuasion had been successfully put to the test in eliciting from the officers and men their entire willingness—despite their love of a horse—to be dismounted and so employed.

<sup>1</sup> A relief had to be found for a battalion of the Manchester Regiment which was in the Sudan. Kitchener proposed that the Maori battalion of the New Zealand contingent should be sent to Khartoum, but Wingate urged for a European battalion. "The Maoris are," Maxwell reported, "a very fine lot of men ; [I think Wingate made a great mistake in not taking them ;] they are intensely loyal, dead keen on fighting, and beg to be allowed to go with the New Zealand contingent wherever they go." Eventually the Maori battalion finished its training at Malta and did fine service with the New Zealanders on the peninsula.

The War Office was a little surprised that Maxwell should not only be prepared, but should actually propose, to take what looked like something of a risk, but Maxwell's reply was that no mishappening could be so great as that of failing to hold our own in Gallipoli. "I think," he telegraphed, "we should take all legitimate risks to avoid this. If, however, I send the bulk of the New Zealand and Australian mounted men as infantry, I think we should send infantry to Egypt when you can manage it."

If there was little prospect of fresh infantry for the moment, comfort could be found in the presence of the 2nd Mounted Yeomanry Division. And a little later there was to be a pleasant surprise in a telegram from the Governor-General of Australia announcing that three more infantry brigades, with a brigade of Light Horse, would complete their training in Egypt.

Meanwhile, Sir John was to forestall what might have been a very unhappy happening. The Indian troops on the 27th April had gone delightedly to the new theatre of war, but scarcely had they landed when a foul and false whisper was spread that danger lay in setting Mohammed to fight Mohammed. It was useless for the Brigadier to protest against a surmise as unfounded as it was unjust, and to assert his own unbounded confidence in the men he was going to lead. G.H.Q. at Lemnos took alarm and would take no risk and hurriedly re-embarked the two Mohammedan units of the 29th Brigade with instructions to the transports to steam to Alexandria. A more palpable blunder could scarcely have been committed and Maxwell sought at once to repair it. Mistrust of the loyalty of two battalions was bad enough, but he was determined that they should not be exposed to the remarks which might rise to the lips of their comrades on the Suez Canal. He at once telegraphed to London for leave to divert the transports from Port Said to Marseilles, so that loyal soldiers of the Emperor of India might give an account

of themselves in France and Flanders. Of the two battalions thus rescued from a wholly unmerited slur, one was to visit in turn all the principal theatres of wars. From Gallipoli, where its value was appraised, it proceeded to France—thence to Mesopotamia, and after a brief spell of service in India wound up its war career in Salonika.

With the fearful carnage and incidental sickness which the fighting in Gallipoli entailed, Egypt among other duties had to assume those of a vast hospital. Transport after transport in rapid succession sailed to Port Said or Alexandria and deposited its freight of maimed and mangled men, and it was quickly evident that the calculated accommodation for casualties would fall short of requirements. In response to Maxwell's appeal the Egyptian Government unhesitatingly surrendered a large number of beds in the State Hospitals and placed any and every suitable building at his disposal, while the Department of Public Health offered their resources and skilled personnel to deal with the emergency.

Unfortunately the Red Cross Society at home had up to now not looked farther than France and Flanders and none of their nursing sisters were at first available to staff the improvised hospitals; beds were sadly insufficient in quantity and no machinery was in working order to minister to the comfort of the sick. But any confusion was of short duration, military administration promptly asserted itself, within so short a period as to cause wonderment and open-mouthed admiration five General Hospitals were operating, for every wounded soldier there was a bed and all that surgical and medical skill could do to relieve him, and Maxwell, who was never prone to exaggeration, could report on the 25th May that he was "quite prepared to stand or fall by medical arrangements here as I think they are splendid."

"I trust you do not attach any importance," the letter

ran on, " to the stories that seem to have been put about that the men wounded at the Dardanelles have not been properly cared for. I consider that which has been done is marvellous! Men were disembarked, killed and wounded at once, the beach torn with shot and shell, yet the wounded were re-embarked same day, their wounds dressed and within eighty hours 17,000 were either comfortably in hospital in Egypt or on the way to Malta (2,000). In the circumstances it was nearly an impossibility to provide medical attendance on the transports, yet it was done as far as possible and I asked for a report from each hospital as to the condition of the patients as they arrived—all reports said that under the military conditions it was quite extraordinary what was done."

Nor was Sir John backward to admit his debt to the feminine Detachments who were entitled to label of "Voluntary Aid" in special degree. From the moment Turkey declared war, offers of assistance poured in, but the spirited volunteers had, of course, not been trained in any point of war. The ladies were even more pertinacious than the men, and Maxwell, who tried to speak fair words to them all, was obliged to repel gently one applicant by inviting her to become a despatch rider, a suggestion which could not be entertained as motor-cycling had not then become a feminine accomplishment. But Englishwomen were not to be discouraged by their immediate lack of technical skill; groups of them banded themselves together to learn all the lessons of First Aid, and although they failed to gain recognition from the Red Cross at home, and although they had to put their hands into their own pockets for their training and many other items, they went bravely on and in the agonizing days which succeeded Hamilton's first rebuff, the V.A.D.'s of Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said were to prove of incalculable, and amazing, value.

Women who had been accustomed to be served were to be the most devoted servants and the most amenable to discipline; they would scrub, make beds, serve in steam-



ing canteens, no task too menial, and the more laborious the more light-heartedly they approached it.

Offers of private nursing-homes and loans of private houses came in abundance and were kept up by public subscription or private munificence ; the civilian population eagerly undertook to supplement official and professional efforts. Hospital trains from the ports disgorged twice daily in Cairo their convoys of wounded, whose journey had been soothed and helped by women travelling to and fro for that purpose, while other faithful souls waited on the platforms to adjust a displaced bandage or hand the cup of tea for which there seemed a constant craving.

In Alexandria the townspeople, not troubling themselves over-much about authority, had, with the first shot in the Canal, opened subscription lists and formed a professional First Aid of their own. Cairo had not been too proud to follow a good example, and of unsavoury Port Said it may at least be said that nowhere could sick and wounded have been more sedulously landed and more kindly cared for. There was no mechanical or horse transport available to carry the lying-down cases from ship to hospital, so the elder men formed themselves into stretcher-carrying parties ; from the resident Englishwomen came the nurses to help their all too few professional sisters while those unfit for laborious work placed themselves on a roster of unfussy, and therefore always welcome, hospital visitors. It is no figure of speech because it is irrefutably true, that Maxwell concerned himself closely with every consideration and detail affecting the care of the men whom Gallipoli had so fearfully bruised ; through the long hot months, with all the pressure of purely military work, scarcely a day, and never a week, passed without a visit to one or other of the hospitals where his coming was warmly greeted by the officials and often rapturously by the patients. But woe betide any official to whom the slightest sign of harshness or lack of care could be traced.

" I want you to do me a service," he wrote to Commis-

sioner Unsworth.<sup>1</sup> "Visit Lunar Park convalescent hospital and find out by personal observation if the inmates have any cause for complaint as regards their food, its quality, quantity, whether properly cooked or not. I don't want you to do more than be able to come and tell me with personal knowledge that there *is* or *is not* cause for complaint. I also do not want it known that I have asked you to do this. It is run by Australian Medical Staff. I enclose you an authority if you are asked for one."

The difficulties which had to be faced in early days and which required such strenuous and warm-hearted efforts to overcome, were of course largely due to miscalculation of the casualties which the M.E.F. were to incur in the landings at Gallipoli. These had been estimated at 10,000, to be divided between Egypt and Malta, whereas by the middle of May over 15,000 casualties were being dealt with in Egypt alone, a figure to be doubled within six weeks. The Suvla Bay landing and contemporary operations elsewhere resulted in the arrival of 20,000 more, but by now generous assistance was forthcoming from England and organization on the spot was nearing perfection.

If the work of the Red Cross votaries was a matter of cardinal importance, the institution modelled upon it and known as the Red Crescent had to be considered and dealt with. The Red Crescent had come into being in the last Balkan War, but only a skeleton organization had been kept up, and the arrival of Turkish casualties from the Suez Canal unmistakably rendered its functions to be once more eminently desirable, if not positively necessary, and stung by the superb and unflagging efforts of England and

<sup>1</sup> Kitchener, having heard of the work of this ardent officer of the Salvation Army, had intended to send Commissioner Unsworth to Cairo, Port Said and Aden to make a massed attack on the touts and procurers, but the outbreak of the War prevented this. From the beginning of 1915 to the end of the War he was with the Australians in Egypt and Gallipoli.

France to raise fresh Red Cross units, benevolent Egyptians opened a hospital for the reception of their co-religionists who were wounded prisoners of war. So far so good, but the idea was soon abroad that the administration of the hospital was faulty, and that the Red Crescent was not getting full value for its money. Maxwell took the bull by the horns in appointing Prince Ahmed Fuad—later to become King of Egypt—as sequestrator and administrator of the Society, with powers to apply the funds to the upkeep of a hospital or to any other desirable scheme. It had not been difficult to discover that the vice inherent in the hitherto system was the familiar one which arises from the desire of well-meaning people to interfere with the technical side of hospital work, as to which they are so often crassly ignorant. In appointing a new advisory committee, Sir John gave that body to understand that they had neither part nor lot in the medical and surgical administration of the Red Crescent, and he enforced his point with the injunction that the Committee, in case of doubt or difficulty, must refer to the Egyptian Government Hospital in Cairo, and, if further difference of opinion should arise, to himself in person. It was to the credit of the sequestrator and the comfort of the General that the latter was never called upon to take action or solve any dispute.

As the summer drew on Maxwell was to lay a heavy, and arresting, finger on a growing evil. Prices of commodities were being pushed up in all markets, speculation in foodstuffs was to be discerned in all countries, and the temptation to hoard supplies was contagious; the harvest in Egypt had been plentiful, the cereal market was of course affected by the upward movement, and producers, other than altruists, were disposed to profit by the situation and hold up their stocks. The Government had no power to stop the practice and turned, not in vain, to the Army. A sternly-worded proclamation was put out in mid-August, in which it was forbidden—under pain of seizure and sale—to accumulate or illicitly export food supplies.

But for the moment the evil was checked and not choked. The Army in Egypt of 1915, a hundredfold the Army of 1914, was sure to feel the pinch due to one-sided gambling in foodstuffs and could only obtain forage at an exorbitant price.

Contractors sunned themselves with the idea that the military services were in their hands and that they could squeeze the Army with respect to the quantities of Egyptian hay imperatively required. Maxwell quietly arranged that the Egyptian Government should act as Army agents and a timely co-operation between the Army and the Ministry of Agriculture sufficed for his needs. The agriculturist was neither threatened nor coerced ; the trusting minions of the Ministry fixed fair prices and reminded cultivators that there were in existence restrictions upon the export of Egyptian hay ; the producer took the hint, released his stocks and the King's horses as well as the King's men had their fill without recourse to requisition.

## CHAPTER XXI

### DEMANDS FOR TROOPS

**D**ESPITE the departure of troops to Gallipoli and the despatch of the 28th Indian Brigade to Basra, the quantity of men in Egypt never seemed to diminish, although, with the withdrawal of the best formations, their quality as regards trained efficiency sank very considerably. A return made to the War Office on the 9th July showed 70,000 officers and men "including 28,000 in the M.E.F. base," with 36,000 horses and 16,000 mules, most of the latter legacies from formations which had gone to Gallipoli; there were also 11,000 officers and men in hospital of whom 9,000 represented Hamilton's casualties and sick. But ration strength may well be in inverse ratio to fighting strength. No one could have been more open-handed than Maxwell in supplying Hamilton's needs, but when, in mid-July, he was asked for all his mounted men to be used as infantry, he was bound to point out that this would really leave Egypt open to danger.

A third Indian Brigade had by now gone to Aden, and their duties had been taken over on the Canal by a brigade of the 2nd Mounted Division, which was booked for all the duties in Cairo and most of those in Alexandria; Sir John had sent away practically all the trained Australians and New Zealanders, and he was now asked to be responsible for the security of Egypt without a single formation of British troops.

He was not, however, going to turn down Hamilton's request, although he would be at his wits' end even to

find duty men for Cairo and Alexandria ; and he rapidly arranged to send to Gallipoli General Peyton with 300 officers and 5,000 men of the 2nd Mounted Division and Briscoe's Yeomanry Brigade. But here Kitchener intervened with a reminder to Hamilton that the garrison of Egypt, including the Yeomanry, were only placed at his disposal for a brief spell and in case of dire necessity ; there was no question of Maxwell being drained of his resources before troops, specially detailed for the M.E.F., had been employed. The 53rd Division was actually now at Alexandria, and the 54th was in process of arrival, and Hamilton must really use these additions to his already very large force before calling on the Yeomanry. But Maxwell was not long to enjoy even the slender means thus left to him ; ten days after the historic landing in Suvla Bay on the 6th August, the mounted men were dismounted and sailed for the scene of action.

The story of the despatch of Younghusband's brigade was the oft-told story of a sudden emergency. In the last week in June the Turks sat down at Sheikh Sayed and began to shell the island of "Perim." The Government of India asked if Maxwell could despatch an expedition against the Turks on the mainland at Sheikh Sayed, 100 miles west of Aden. Maxwell was not unwilling, but referred the request to Kitchener, who was not disposed to smile on it. The Turks at Sheikh Sayed could not be very mischievous ; there was much that was really vital needing adequate protection ; all enterprises, unless absolutely unavoidable, should be discouraged, was the strain of the Secretary of State's telegram, in which he reminded Maxwell that an attack in force would require considerable numerical superiority, and pertinently asked him whether he thought the Turkish works could be captured and the guns shelling Perim destroyed within a week.

"We don't want," Kitchener urged, "to fritter away forces and diminish the strength of Egypt, and unless success is fairly certain, it is undesirable to under-

take operations which would only have a temporary effect."

The expedition was therefore held in abeyance, and fortunately so, for on July 4th Turkish forces attacked, and the next day took Lahej within the frontier of the Aden Protectorate. Aden, Maxwell was sure, must be secured against all risks, and to a vital spot he hurried Younghusband's brigade—the 3rd Indian Brigade he had released—and two batteries of artillery who arrived in time to forestall any real danger, but to be committed to a long bout of guerrilla warfare under very searching climatic conditions.

From one quarter Maxwell enjoyed rather unexpected relief. He was kept fully informed as to the sporadic disturbances in the Sudan, due partly to the discomfort which a tussle between Great Britain and the Khalifate aroused in the Moslem mind, and even more to the falsehoods spread by Turkish agents as to an imaginary British reverse on the Canal, a total collapse of the Russian forces and a complete rout from Gallipoli. The operations necessitated by these outbreaks were of minor importance, but Maxwell had given his word that if necessary he would send a British contingent to help, and for some time he was in daily dread of being called upon to do so. But so skilful were Wingate's measures that he was not only able to rely wholly on his own Egyptian and Sudanese troops, but he could even lend both Maxwell and Hamilton a helping hand with personnel and material, and notably with a choice band of British officers.

Although success had been denied to Hamilton at Suvla, there was no whisper as yet of any abandonment of the Gallipoli enterprise, and the problem still stood how to supply the M.E.F.—and to supply them as speedily as possible—with reinforcements and drafts for which Hamilton constantly called.

The August returns from the Headquarters Office still

showed a large number of men at the base, but Maxwell had to represent these, apart from those awaiting transport to Mudros, as men unfit or looking after five horses apiece belonging to the combatants in Gallipoli who had left much of their transport behind. This rather disconcerting fact was accepted, as also a constructive suggestion which Sir John put out.

The 4th Light Horse Brigade had arrived from Australia with one regiment only mounted. This regiment might act as Divisional Cavalry to the 5th, 6th and 7th Brigades, while the other two might serve as drafts to the 3rd Light Horse Brigade already on the peninsula.

Sir John also agreed handsomely with Sir Ian that all the troops from the United Kingdom, Gibraltar, Marseilles and Malta—except a garrison battalion for the Sudan and two trained and two untrained Territorial battalions required for his own needs—should head for Mudros without touching at Alexandria. Then came the question whether the 28th Indian Brigade could take arms against followers of Mohammed, the implication being whether it was suitable for employment anywhere so near Constantinople as the peninsula.

The War Office, rather offhandedly, offered the 51st and 53rd Sikhs from this Brigade to Hamilton, but Maxwell for once put his own toes in the ground. He was again beginning to have trouble on the Canal front where, he reminded Kitchener, his Indian troops had scarcely two nights' sleep in a week ; his argument carried, and no man of the 28th Brigade was put under orders for Gallipoli.

The note of complaint was seldom struck, but even Maxwell's broad shoulders now and again waxed a little weary, and in condoling with Kitchener on the Suvla reverse, a murmur was wrung from him.

"I have no doubt you are just as disappointed as I am over this Dardanelles affair ; all my show here has been torn to pieces, and all to no purpose. Our prestige here



has gone down to zero, and people talk openly of the Dardanelles as the grave of the British.

"According to Hamilton, he has always *just* been within an ace of doing a big thing, yet he always just succeeds in missing it!! He seems more than satisfied with his own Staff, and freely blames others! I, however, hear other stories and criticisms of his Staff which would make his hair stand up if he heard them! The Suvla Bay effort was not a good one, and the poor gallant 2nd Mounted Division was badly left by someone.

"I have got an infernal 'old man of the sea' on my back in Sennusi, it is impossible to tell what he is up to; I don't think he knows himself, one week it is all for peace, another all for war; I rather hope he will come on and have done with it. But of course I don't want to get involved in an interminable struggle and have to guard miles and miles of frontier; to say nothing of the unrest any action of Sennusi's is bound to cause.

"Fortunately few realize that I have no muscle in my right arm, but if horses and vehicles would only fight I am well off. In one of the Middlesex Regiments recently sent me, I found a warrior aged 14, proudly in the ranks. He really looked more formidable than some a little older than himself, but youth is a good fault, and when the Germans are getting old and weary, my warrior will just be coming on.

"What is Bulgaria going to do? I dare not send my warrior there, for Ferdinand would get at him surely! It looks as if that arch fiend was going with Germany, but there will be a revolution—I hope. How well we have done in Mesopotamia. I believe all the Turks there would be with us with a little persuasion.

"We ought to get all the prisoners over here and hand them over to the Sherif of Mecca. I have now 4,000 Syrian refugees at Alexandria and 5,000 Armenians at Port Said, 2,500 Turkish prisoners of war, so I am gradually filling up the spare ground here." (September 1st.)

As September was closing, a new situation was arising. Bulgaria had taken up arms, obviously to invade Serbia from the east just when she was being engaged from the north ; the Serbians, under the terms of a treaty, called out to Greece for help, and Greece, in order to keep her word, called upon the Allies to send troops to Salonika.

Maxwell was asked to organize a Yeomanry Regiment for this purpose from details of the 2nd Mounted Division, but while cheerfully arranging this M. Venizelos fell from power and the invitation to land at Salonika was cancelled. But on the 7th October fresh orders were given to the 10th Division to concentrate at Mudros, and the hurriedly-put-together Yeomanry regiment was again put under orders.

Just a little bewildered perhaps, Maxwell wrote on the 10th October to Kitchener's personal private secretary <sup>1</sup> :

"Now we are, I presume, to turn on to Salonika ; at the moment I am writing there is some hitch, but the Yeomanry are ready to go. Of course I have only the skim-milk, for the cream of the 2nd Mounted Division footed it off to Gallipoli.

"I wish you would impress on your Chief the good work done at the School of Instruction here under Generals Spiers and Colston. It is run under difficult circumstances, for everything I get together is upset by the voracious Mediterranean Force. I am distressed about the latter, for, notwithstanding the most magnificent despatches that were ever penned, little has been accomplished. The men have fought magnificently, and their efforts are worthy of success, but now they can't get on and sickness is decimating them. It is difficult to gauge correctly the situation, but everyone who returns from the front has the same story to tell—impasse."

As this letter was being written, Kitchener was asking Ian Hamilton what his estimate was as to the losses we were likely to incur, in the event of a withdrawal from Gallipoli, to receive the mournful reply that we could not

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Arthur.

reckon on getting away without sacrificing something like half the force as well as the guns, stores, railway plant and horses. In other words, the Commander would not hear of calling off his brave men, and his opinion being therefore prejudiced, he was diplomatically invited to tour the Near East and report on prevailing conditions, while to Sir Charles Monro <sup>1</sup> was committed the command of the M.E.F. With evacuation in the air, Maxwell's first thought was of an attack on the Suez Canal, and his reflections were fortified by an urgent inquiry from Kitchener as to Turkish communication in Asia Minor and Syria, and Maxwell's plans for meeting any renewed Turkish offensive.

Maxwell replied—he could scarcely reply otherwise—that his plan of defence must depend upon his means, as for the moment he never knew what calls Gallipoli or other theatres of war might make on him.

<sup>1</sup> “Monro telegraphs he is coming to Egypt to confer with me on Friday. Please tell me what are our relative positions with regard to Egyptian questions.” (Maxwell to Kitchener.)

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE HUGE BASE

**A**T the end of October, Kitchener was asked by the Cabinet to call on Joffre at Chantilly and then to proceed at once to the Dardanelles, confer with Maxwell<sup>1</sup> and the other experts, and give final advice as to whether the position should be held. The correspondence between Maxwell and the War Secretary up to now gives proof that although the former never had any appetite for the Gallipoli enterprise, his distaste—the military consideration apart—for evacuation was no less pronounced than that of his old Chief. For both of them, there was underlying any notion of withdrawal the burning question as to the effect in the East of a British failure to accomplish a set purpose. The evacuation was eventually to take place with hardly a bruise to the British and with but little stir among the masses of the Sovereign's Eastern subjects, nor could it be overlooked that Gallipoli had done much to clear the road to Jerusalem. But with the passage of years Maxwell did not think it altogether fanciful to suggest that the apparent calm of the moment might prove somewhat deceptive and that, in time, if not in his time, disquiet and disruption in Egypt, and even in India, might be the recognized sequel of a distinct

<sup>1</sup> "To-night I am leaving for Alexandria and Gallipoli in order to go into the whole question raised by Monro's reports. I don't wish my presence to be known, but I should like to see M'Mahon on board the man-of-war which should arrive Monday night. Can you arrange this secretly? I shall of course not land, but go on in the evening to Gallipoli."

denial of success imposed by Oriental foemen to a British force in arms.

Kitchener arrived at Mudros on the 10th November, where M'Mahon, Monro, Maxwell and Birdwood had duly repaired to meet him. The dominant thought of the military conclave was that if the peninsula must be left to the Turk, a resounding blow should be dealt to him elsewhere. Maxwell's agile mind turned at once to the Gulf of Iskanderun; he hugged himself with the possibility of cutting the Turkish communications not only with Syria, but with Mesopotamia, where General Townsend, six weeks earlier, had defeated the Turks at Kut-el-Amara. He was quite prepared to meet the objections which Kitchener had cabled to him on his way out, stressing the submarine peril and perhaps deliberately overstating the force which the enterprise would require; Sir John was sure that 100,000 men would suffice for the job and that to occupy a strategical position on the Gulf would enable Egypt to be held, and our footing in Mesopotamia to be maintained with far fewer troops than would otherwise be needed. He had of course had access to the memorandum, lately prepared by the War Office and Admiralty, in which it had been shown that there were only two solutions to the problems involving Syria and the defence of Egypt:

(a) Military operations against the Gulf of Iskanderun.<sup>1</sup>

(b) The defence of the line of the Suez Canal.

That evening, Kitchener telegraphed to the Prime Minister that a landing at Ayas Bay, in the Gulf of Alexandretta, would fulfil a double purpose: there would be warded off the blow against Egypt, which might be quickly threatened by the liberation of the troops contained at Gallipoli, and every ill effect produced on the Mohammedan world by our retirement would be healthily counteracted.

<sup>1</sup> Just before the first landing Maxwell had telegraphed to Kitchener: "I am very uneasy about this enterprise; could we not carry out the original intention, and land at Alexandretta?"

The telegram, which set out the plan in detail, had for its preamble : " Maxwell will have prepared you for the great difficulty that would be experienced in defending Egypt if peninsula is evacuated, unless some other action is at once taken elsewhere to counteract the disastrous effect on the Mohammedan and the Arab world. M'Mahon holds strongly to the same opinion, having consulted with Maxwell and Monro in Egypt, and all three are of the opinion that a landing in the neighbourhood of Alexandretta should be taken before the peninsula is evacuated. Ayas Bay is the place chosen in order to cut and hold the railway between Amanus and Taurus at Missis, preventing the Turks moving East, and thus protecting Egypt and Baghdad."

Having despatched his telegram, Kitchener, with Maxwell as his companion, spent the next three days in a thorough overhaul of the Anzac position, where he had a rapturous greeting from Australians and New Zealanders ; as a result of a methodical inspection, both men agreed that evacuation need not be so costly as the British Cabinet had been led to fear, especially if certain precautions, largely suggested by Birdwood, were closely observed.

The General Staff pronounced that they viewed the Alexandretta scheme "with grave concern." The locality, they alleged, was favourable for the Turks ; the perimeter finally to be held—which appeared to be 50 miles—would take about 160,000 infantry ; the forces would probably be tied for the remainder of the War, re-embarkation being little if less difficult than the evacuation of Gallipoli ; the strain on available military resources would be excessive, and there would be a "most dangerous dissemination of both Naval and Military forces" ; the defence of Egypt could be better conducted on the Suez Canal line. To these objections Kitchener replied categorically within an hour of receiving the message, reminding the Prime Minister that the exponents of the scheme were in the nature of experts :

“There is nothing in the objections raised in your telegram that was not foreseen and discussed here before sending my telegram.

“The political situation in the East in our opinion so seriously affects purely military considerations as to outweigh those military disadvantages which might otherwise carry weight. The effect in the East of the Turkish Army being allowed to carry out unopposed and unmolested the declared intentions of Germany, combined with a possible evacuation of our positions in Gallipoli (which would be equivalent to a serious defeat), will be enormous, and will have far-reaching results by throwing the Arabs into German hands and thus uniting them against us, endangering French as well as British possessions.

“M'Mahon, Maxwell and myself must be admitted to know the difficulties of defence in Egypt, and we are unanimously of opinion that your plan for carrying this out on the Canal is doomed to failure, while involving much greater commitments in men and resources than the plan we advocate. In Egypt we should have to face certain hostility all along the Western frontier, which would extend to Tunis, Algiers and Morocco ; serious unrest and disturbances throughout Egypt and the Sudan, endangering our internal communications as well as the closing of the Canal for a prolonged period. Reliance on the defence of Egypt in Egypt foreshadows, in our opinion, a withdrawal from it and the Sudan within a measurable time, with results so far-reaching both for ourselves and France as possibly to allow the Germans to attain their object and thus jeopardize the campaign in Europe by the withdrawal of larger forces than can be afforded.

“The Admiral will telegraph on the Naval question, which does not seem to us and to him to be insuperable.”

The discussion by telegram was to go on for many days, Kitchener reminding the Prime Minister that the rejection of his proposals might enable the Germans to carry out

their announced object against Egypt and the East, and that Egypt herself might best be defended by external offensive ; he was told that no decision could be arrived at until the matter had been referred to a conference in Paris, and meanwhile he was instructed to take Maxwell with him and proceed to Athens and impress upon King Constantine that the disarmament or internment of Allied troops at Salonika would be constituted as an Act of War and that there was no question of forcing Greece into an unwilling alliance.

The interview between King Constantine and Kitchener took place on the 20th November and culminated in the Monarch's nervous question : "What shall I do when Germany threatens me with a million men?" "Remember the four millions England will have in the field next year," was the reply.

In his letters describing his brief and intensive visit to Greece, Maxwell was evidently unfavourably impressed with the methods and manners of General Sarraïl, and described Salonika as "chock-a-block with Greek troops, refugees and Franco-British troops, with food at famine prices." He found the Greek Chief of the Staff well primed with German ideas about the War, but impressed with the same idea as himself, that a concentration of troops at Ayas Bay might be the only means of forestalling or defeating a Germano-Turkish attack on Egypt and the East.

Before leaving Greece, however, "the decision" had been arrived at, and was largely influenced by the objections, chiefly political, raised by France. If the British Government had not smiled on Ayas Bay, the French Government had heavily frowned on it ; although a suggestion had emanated from Maxwell that their susceptibilities could be soothed by offering them Syria with suitable boundaries at the end of the War.

Arrived at Mudros after a boisterous passage, Kitchener was at once in conference with Maxwell and Birdwood on the crucial questions of the evacuation of Gallipoli and



the defence of Egypt. "All our efforts," Kitchener telegraphed to the Prime Minister, "will have to be concentrated on the defence of Egypt from Egypt, and I propose to send General Horne<sup>1</sup> there to study the situation with Maxwell and M'Mahon, with whom I have already discussed the steps it will be necessary to take."

On the 24th November Maxwell bade Kitchener goodbye and returned to face one of the difficult situations which are apt to confront British Generals. While the force in Egypt was reduced to a fraction of a training and reinforcement camp, a solid line of resistance had to be thrown out far enough east to protect the Canal from fire of enemy artillery, and a system of active defence was to be adopted.

In Cairo Maxwell found a telegram of inquiry from the War Office as to what he considered absolutely necessary to protect the Canal against a first-class offensive ; he was asked on what he based an estimate of the scale of attack on Egypt ; where would Turkish railhead be and how many lines thenceforward are they likely to use ; what would be his difficulties of maintenance and distribution of supplies beyond railhead ? What guns could he bring up ; could he maintain attack after March ; how soon could his attack begin ? His estimate was founded upon a system of defence 12,000 yards east of the Canal, and there figured in it 12 Infantry divisions, a Cavalry division, and 20 battalions of heavy and siege artillery ; two additional divisions for the defence of Egypt herself, with three brigades to look after the Western frontier ; it was also suggested that a light railway should be laid to Katiya, on the coast road to Palestine, so that the enemy could be denied the only approach to the Canal fairly well supplied with water.

He considered that the next attack of the Turks, if it came, would be on a much larger scale, that they might

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards G.O.C. 1st Army in France, created Lord Horne, 1920.

easily be afoot within three months and, supplied by their railway, might defy the heat and squat down in trenches through the summer in front of the British defences—and, here was the crux, with a powerful Turkish force at striking distance from the Canal, Egypt's benevolence could no longer be relied on. There was one happy thought that a vigorous counter-attack could now be envisaged which, ten months before, lack of water transport, no less than the restrictions laid upon him, had prevented.

"I was summoned to go to Mudros," he wrote to Wingate, "to meet Lord Kitchener, and have now returned. I was very glad to go and see Mudros and Gallipoli; Lord Kitchener was in very good form and looked but little the worse for his arduous labours. We visited Anzac, Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. All the men looked happy and contented, hard and fit. Sickness is greatly decreasing—Anzac is marvellous, like a rabbit warren; how on earth they managed to land is a mystery—the Turks must have been taken aback with surprise at their boldness and become paralysed, for two men and a boy ought to have stopped them. . . .

"The fact of our occupation of Gallipoli has, however, served a very good purpose in keeping a large part of the Turkish Army, and incidentally we have killed off a large number of their best troops. Now comes the question whether it will continue to serve that purpose, for once the Germans get into touch with Constantinople, they will send H.E. Howitzers, hold the Turkish entrenchments with fewer men and release a large portion of the Turkish forces now in Gallipoli. The questions Lord Kitchener has to decide are therefore the above and if it is best to withdraw whilst we can or wait until we are forced to evacuate.

"Much the same considerations govern the Salonika question, where we arrived hopelessly late to be of any use to Servia.

“ We all, Lord Kitchener included, strongly put forward that it was suicide to evacuate Gallipoli and not go for the Turks elsewhere. The elsewhere seemed to us clearly marked. But politicians in France and England and oddly enough the Navy are dead against another expedition anywhere. The result is that I am now to seriously undertake the defence of Egypt from Egypt and have to put the line of the Suez Canal into such a state that not only will it ensure Egypt from attack, but will also enable the Suez Canal traffic to continue without interruption. This can only be done by a line of entrenchments some 10 to 12 miles east of the Canal ; the canal is 87 miles long, so you can calculate the number of men I must have, to say nothing of the defence of the Western frontier, preservation of order in the cities and provinces, safeguarding communications and possibly having to reinforce you.

“ Thus many more men are likely to be locked up in Egypt than the policy we urge. The effect of all this on Arabia and the Far East, also on the West as far as Morocco, will be deplorable. India will be affected and, if we do not watch it, our Eastern Empire will be seriously imperilled. Lord Kitchener has promised me practically all I want, for though he may not agree with the policy he is determined that Egypt will run no risks. So I am in the throes of reorganization and preparation for defence. I telegraphed to you about the possibility of calling up some 25,000 conscripts ; the Egyptian authorities do not like this, but have undertaken to get me all the labour I want. I may have to send to the Sudan for riding camels. I wonder how many I could get there !

“ Now as to Sennusi, the situation became impossible, and whilst I was away, three enemy submarines appeared on the scene and upset the apple-cart. Sennusi professes ignorance of all that goes on around him ; there are some 70 shipwrecked Englishmen in his hands, he has been cutting our telegraph wires, rushing our sentries, firing into our camps and committing a series of hostile acts

that we cannot tolerate. We were forced to evacuate Sollum, whereupon Basani was sacked and burnt. I have now a strong force at Matruh and am holding the line of the railway with posts at Maghera, Natrun and a strong force at the Fayoum. This is all I can do for the present, but I think it will make Sennusi think, especially as I have stopped all supplies going West. I have little doubt that Nuri Bey is treating Sennusi like Enver Pasha treats the Sultan. But we cannot go on with all this nonsense. Mohammed Idrissi is with Sennusi, but we have lost all communication and touch with them. On the whole it is just as well to know how we stand in regard to the West before the Turks move towards our Eastern frontier. It is annoying, but I have done all I could to prevent it, and though Sennusi says 'God knows best,' I think his godliness is adulterated with German-Turkish money and propaganda. Sirva, I am not holding on to, it is too far and unimportant to bother about. The Coast Guard has proved unreliable. I am disarming it and taking their camels away. I regret to say Snow also reports that the Egyptian Army officers of the Sollum garrison and the artillery have been got at and are unreliable. I am ordering them to rejoin their units on the grounds that they are no longer required. The vicinity of Sennusi seems too much for ignorant Moslems. I am reorganizing my Staff, and I have been obliged to take the Savoy Hotel to house it. A huge base under General Ellison is being formed which will be the supply centre for all the forces operating in the East. There are very nearly enough Generals and Brigadiers in Egypt to form a battalion !!" (Maxwell to Wingate.)

A "huge base" was indeed no exaggerated term. With the institution of operations in Salonika—as to which the French politicians were to over-persuade the British Cabinet—Egypt, for a while, could claim to be the base for two campaigns, with a third only checked on her Eastern frontier, and a fourth imminent westwards. It

did not suffice simply to enlarge the base at Alexandria, in order to provide for the increased requirements of the force in Egypt, of all the forces in the Levant and of a force which might materialize for a new campaign. The operations of these forces were, and would be, under different commanders, and as a system of "first come, first served," would not avail, jealousies and disputes might well arise if the officers charged with the issues of supplies and stores had to decide upon the priority of demands made to them. Centralization was necessary and must lodge in the War Office, where happily there existed a super-man in the form of the Quartermaster-General, Sir John Cowans, in whom was vested the same control of supplies in the East as in the West ; the Adjutant-General was to "enjoy" a similar measure of authority with regard to man power and hospitals, and Major-General Ellison was appointed to the command of the "huge base," eventually, it was understood, to make way for General Altham. A corner was wisely left open in the reorganization ; strictly speaking, under the new scheme, the Levant base should buy the supplies drawn from Egypt and the force in Egypt should have been placed for their foodstuffs in the same relation to the base as the other forces in the Levant. But common sense prevailed ; the Egyptian military authorities, working in close co-operation with the Egyptian Government, had an intimate knowledge of the country and knew exactly when, where and how to buy, and it was unhesitatingly decided that Maxwell and his staff should do all the shopping on behalf of the base.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### DEFENCE OF THE CANAL

THE alignment of the outer defences, laid down by General Horne, was referred by Maxwell to the War Office and approved ; some advanced posts were suggested, but no mention made of the Katiya district, the centre of important oases.

The General Staff had considered as excessive Sir John's estimate of the force requisite to make Egypt snug and secure, and had drawn up an alternative scheme, in which this area figured prominently ; it was argued that if the Turks occupied this district, on the best watered route from Palestine to Egypt, they might eventually hurl 300,000 men against the Delta, whereas with Katiya in British hands, the Turkish advance would be made over a waterless stretch, and their attacking force thereby so much reduced that a couple of divisions and two cavalry brigades could keep them in check. Sir Archibald Murray, who for a brief period was to sit in the chair of the C.I.G.S., asked Maxwell if, and why, he disfavoured the occupation of Katiya. The reply was that Katiya by no means marked the end of the water-bearing district on the Northern route, and if the enemy were to be really kept thirsty, it would be necessary for us to push out 45 miles farther, to Bir el Abid ; an equally strong reason advanced was, that to be strong at Katiya would be to eat up all the railway material available, and then both weaken the defence of the central route, where the enemy was pushing on his railway, and also interfere with the

construction of our main defensive line. Horne told Kitchener flatly that he saw eye to eye with Maxwell in this matter, and the advance to Katiya was postponed until substantial progress could be reported as to the construction of protective works.

Parallel to the outer line of defence, and about 4,000 yards behind it, a second line was laid down to check any serious bombardment of the Canal, while a third line of defence was calculated to cover bridge-heads, and vital points on the east bank ; both these lines could be covered by the fire of warships in the land and lakes. The task was, of course, too large to be carried out by military labour ; no field companies could be spared to superintend the work, and only a round dozen of Royal Engineer officers—half the number promised—reported themselves to Maxwell for special service. It was well that Egypt possessed ample resources in labour, and men so highly skilled as Sir Murdoch Macdonald, the Under-Secretary for Public Works, and Colonel Wright, the C.E. in Egypt, to organize and direct it.

Maxwell divided the scheme of defence into three branches : (1) The Engineer Services, exclusive of defensive works (subdivided into water supply, and communications other than railways) ; (2) Engineers' Service on Defence ; and (3) Services in connection with railways ; and to co-ordinate the work he appointed Major-General Sir H. Cox as his representative in all that appertained to defence.

Water, of course, was the large difficulty, and the sole source of water to the Canal district was the Sweet Water Canal running west of the Suez Canal ; to supply troops on the east bank the obstacle of the Canal had to be overcome, and a method of filtration had to be devised. The general system adopted was to establish a series of reinforced concrete reservoirs, with a capacity of 50,000 gallons each, on the east bank, connected by syphoning with filtration plants on the west bank. Thus, and thus only, was it possible to secure water

in sufficient quantity, and of sufficient quality for the drinking purposes of the British troops.

The original scheme of road communications had been very extensive, and lack of labour and material and difficulty with contractors caused it to be modified ; it comprised lateral communications along the east bank, branch roads forward from each of the bases on the Canal to the advanced positions, and lateral communications along the second line of defence—road metal being brought in tugs and barges to the Canal bases, while, as each road progressed, Decauville railways were used to carry it forward.

Floating bridges were increased and improved, with men specially trained to operate them so that they could rapidly be formed up and dismantled. Three heavy bridges, capable of carrying heavy artillery, and five medium bridges to take cavalry, field artillery and infantry, were projected at various points, to be supplemented by existing ferries, and to the Canal Company was assigned the construction of landing-stages.

The work on the defences was begun by establishing a series of posts at points of special importance. So far as labour and material permitted, these were increased with a view to linking them up eventually into a continuous line ; an incidental difficulty arose with the employment of native workmen for whom protective covering parties had to be found and to whom water had to be carried by Camel Convoys.

It was decided not only to double the section of single line, from Zagazig to Ismailia, but also to bring up to the Canal at Kantara the Salkia-Zagazig branch line. Work on doubling the line was started on the 1st December, and Maxwell's mind may have travelled back nineteen years to the labours of the Halfa-Abu-Hamed line when 36 days later the work was completed and the double line open for traffic. For this task, 15,000 men were employed, and there was involved a shifting of nearly 400,000 cubic yards of earth and the transport of over



150,000 tons of material, and the achievement was the more remarkable in that nine military trains were run daily in each direction, besides the usual normal traffic.

It was said of Maxwell that he could estimate the exact fortune of every Pasha and the number of camels which every Sheikh could, either for love or money, produce. His knowledge on the latter point was severely tested even when he determined on the formation of ten camel companies, each consisting of 2,020 camels. This line was to be used as second-line transport for the troops engaged in the defence of the Canal; the personnel of each company consisted of 10 British officers, 10 British N.C.O.'s and 1,168 Egyptians under the charge of an Inspector, Colonel C. H. Whittingham. The purchase of the camels, conducted through the Ministry of the Interior, was no easy matter; the war had closed the camel trade with Arabia, and even a worse enemy than the Turk was to be found in the mange, from which so high a percentage of camels in Egypt suffer in some degree. The Delta camels were plentiful in numbers but various in quality and could with difficulty be tutored to go without water for several days; but although out of the first 150,000 animals brought up for inspection only 13,000 were passed, Maxwell's organization was complete by the spring and sufficiently elastic to be largely increased when the September advance into the desert took place.

In the light of subsequent events, it is easy to suggest that Kitchener was over-anxious as to the safety of Egypt, and that Maxwell's scheme of defence, which was wholly to Kitchener's liking,<sup>1</sup> was too monumental in design

<sup>1</sup> "Existing defences of the Canal are not suitable for possible artillery attack and I am making arrangements for defence in depth—that to defend the Canal under conditions based on the latest experience gained in France, 12 Infantry divisions, 1 Cavalry division, 8 battalions of 60-pdrs. or 4.7's, and 12 battalions of heavy howitzers will be required. Two additional divisions will be required for the defence of Egypt and the protection of internal communications and repression of disorder. To defend the Western frontier a brigade, a Cavalry division, and a battalion of R.H.A. would be required at

and too costly in construction. Even at the time French politicians were vocal as to Great Britain's meticulous care where her own interests were directly concerned, as contrasted with her alleged rather languid support of the Salonika *démarche*. It is perfectly true that British interests were critically at stake, and although honest and strenuous efforts were made to sustain what was largely a political enterprise in the Balkans, the rock fact stood that the evacuation of the peninsula must release a hulking German-led force which might well have been hurled against Egypt, the more so if there seemed to Germany any prospect of really cutting a jugular vein and bleeding Great Britain white. But in war it is so often the unexpected which happens, and the watchman must not be said to have remained awake in vain simply because—perhaps owing to his alertness—the tower has not been assaulted.

It is not to discuss the situation, in which the civilized world was standing to arms, as considered by the great German Headquarters Staff and the local Turco-German strategists to point to a movement of first-rate importance quietly taking shape in Arabia and to which little attention had hitherto been given. With the existence of the Damascus-Medina Railway, the feasibility of withdrawing the Turkish Army Corps from Arabia (not then seriously threatened) was never questioned. On the other hand the British authorities, both in Egypt and the Sudan, were fully alive to the importance of preventing any such military movement taking place. Was the successful raising of the revolt in Arabia led by the Sherif of the Guardian of the Holy Places of Islam, and conducted in its early stages with so much secrecy and with eventually such astounding success, the real cause of the failure of the Turco-German plans to invade Egypt? A close scrutiny of the enemy's strategy as disclosed in their own

three points ; another Infantry brigade will be required for Upper Egypt and another with a battery of R.F.A. will be needed." (Kitchener to P.M., 16th November.)

war histories can alone settle this point, but there is little doubt that the ruse with which the Sennusi was accounted for, the loyalty of Hussein, the large force left in Egypt, the success of the Arabian revolt, and the progress of events in Mesopotamia culminating in the fall of Baghdad, all conspired to thwart Turco-German plans for the invasion of Egypt on a large scale ; and it is fairly certain that the story, which probably lost nothing in the telling, of Maxwell's solid and elaborate preparations to speak effectively with a foe who should dare to lay hands on the Canal, must have contributed largely to the decision not to undertake an operation by no means sure of any signal success, but quite sure to be very expensive both in blood and treasure.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### SENNUSI

TRULY Maxwell could say that the defence of the Canal, the provisioning of Gallipoli, and the maintenance of internal order, had not been his only anxieties ; he had inherited the very awkward legacy of having eventually to bring to book a religious chief, Sayed Ahmed, head of a powerful Mohammedan sect whose influence stretched along the Western frontier of Egypt. Italy, when in 1912 she wrested Tripoli and Cyrenaica from the Ottoman Empire, confined her occupation to the coast-line and avoided contact with the Sennusi, who, if he in his heart disliked the Turk, openly detested the Christian in the form of an Italian, although in 1913 he had not turned a deaf ear to Khedive-inspired German offers of arms and ammunition.

Within a month of his arrival in Egypt Sir John had apprised Kitchener that the Turks were trying to "get at" the Sennusi, but it was not until the early spring of 1915 that any disquieting signs of unrest exhibited themselves on the Western frontier.

At the outbreak of war, the Western frontier was the more difficult to discuss, owing to the cession of Tripoli to Italy, because it was not very precisely defined ; it ran south from the coast west of Sollum, and at Sollum and in charge of the Western frontier was Colonel Snow, of the Egyptian Coast Guards, the prototype of the British officer who can be relied on as a diplomatist and an administrator, scarcely less than a soldier. To Snow there fell a complicated task, and Maxwell's

correspondence and notes bear handsome testimony to the way he addressed himself to it. Snow must negotiate with the Sennusi, he must check intrigue in Egypt which could be traced to the Sennusi followers, and the while, preserve the Moslem leader's respect for, and deep-rooted belief in, British authority and good faith.

Sayed Ahmed must have a word to himself, for in dealing with him, Maxwell had to remember all that tradition, religious fervour, racial characteristics and personal ambition stand for. The Grand Sennusi, as he was often entitled, sprang from the founder of a Mohammedan sect which had quite unjustly incurred the charge of unorthodoxy, their bent being, in character, not unlike the "Onfud movement" of 1833. War with Italy in 1911 had virtually vested him with the temporary rulership of the tribes which set their teeth against any Italian occupation of Cyrenaica, and by the time he had opened "conversations" with the British, the bright idea had obviously occurred to him of making himself sovereign of a large Libyan State. He was a man of marked ability, if rather backward in his appreciation of modern conditions; nor was he quite easy about his personal position, as, if not actually an usurper, he had taken office on account of the youth of his cousin, Mohammed Idris, the direct heir. This young gentleman, having now reached years of discretion, was considered by many as the rightful chief; he happened, moreover, to disfavour altogether the attitude towards Great Britain which Turkey was trying to impose on his uncle, and to secure which the noxious Nuri Bey, Enver's half-brother, was to be an accredited agent, with pockets well lined for the job. On the lines of Von der Goltz's mission to Turkey, Nuri was despatched to the camp outside Sollum and deputed there to train, and to swell, the Sennusi's troops. He had as his adjutant one Jaafar Pasha, who had passed through the military school at Constantinople, and whom Maxwell aptly alluded to as a Germanized Turk of considerable

ability ; and Sayed's intractability, as Sir John quickly saw, grew with his military strength.

In mid-May it was known that Sayed had been joined by a party of German and Turkish officers who had brought with them a large supply of rifles, ammunition, machine-guns, and other instruments of war, and whose influence had inclined Sayed, to whom the Hague Convention was a dead letter, to make a rather impudent demand for an Italian prisoner, who had escaped his clutches and fled to Cairo. A soft answer, wrapping up a stout denial, was, however, returned to him, Maxwell being intent on avoiding, or anyhow putting off as long as possible, any rupture with a chieftain who might prove a very troublesome, if not a very tough, opponent. "Sennusi continues to be tiresome," Maxwell wrote to Wingate, "and I think he is egged on to ask for things in the hopes that we may make a quarrel, but this is not the moment to square up to him."

The failure of Prince von Bülow's mission to Rome and the rather belated decision of Italy to take the field was to put for a moment a spoke in the Sennusi wheel, a term being now set to intrigues in Rome, as to which Germans, Turks and renegade Egyptians could hitherto complacently congratulate themselves. But the machinations of Turkey were only checked for a moment, and on June 24th Maxwell was writing to Kitchener :

"I am much concerned about the Sennusi. We have done all we can to keep him quiet, but there is no doubt that his claims to temporal power are daily becoming more and more pronounced. One day we will have to reckon with him. As you know, we have always treated him as a religious Sheikh of very considerable importance. But since the Tripolitan War and his undoubted success over the Italians his status has changed. There is no doubt that if he declared against us we would have an infinity of trouble and no one can foresee where it would end. All our coastguards, Bedouins of the West right up to Darfur, would be, if not actively for him, certainly not

against him. He would have a considerable following in Egypt too, and all this on account of the religious veneration in which he is held. But there is also the fact that he has considerable stocks of mountain and machine-guns, rifles and ammunition taken from the Italians, and it is believed augmented by smuggling from Turkey ; but I am not sure of the latter, as there seems little object in this where he gets so much from the Italians. He is now camped close to Sollum with about 1,500 armed men who are well trained. He demands as a right that his emissaries should freely enter Egypt, he sends in men to collect supplies and taxes from his Zawias in our territory. His own (X) territory is closely guarded, as is also his camp. His adherents are daily becoming more and more convinced that he is a great power. He even hints at times of the possibility of war with England, though he confesses he does not want it. He has latterly been talking rather big about free trade between him and Egypt and wishes all his supplies duty and Custom, also search, free. We have humoured him to the full and the question comes whether this should go on until the War is over or that we should pull him up and take the consequences. Of course, he takes the line that Islam knows no frontiers and he has a right to do what he likes with his brethren in Egypt. I do not think there is the least doubt that there are two parties in his camp, one urging him to break with us, the other a peace party. He is a shrewd man but with no great knowledge of our world, yet seems to have a clear idea that he is in a strong position. Nuri Bey and others are with him, nominally in confinement, but they exercise pressure on Sennusi, and in my opinion persuade him to ask for concessions from us which they think we will refuse, and thus, by making him angry, push him to break with us. He recently captured several motor-cars from the Italians, and now wants petrol to work them. I don't think there is any doubt he received considerable sums of money from Turkey, for he seems to have plenty to spend.

"I think it right that you should know all this, and I think you will agree that, whatever the future may bring forth, we must keep the Sennusi quiet and with us, even at the risk of appearing weak and afraid of him. We cannot afford an outbreak of Islamism just now ; this is what the Germans are trying for, and I see that little arch-spy, —, is off to Persia to make trouble. . . .

"I telegraphed you the details of a scheme to use the Hashish smugglers to get at the submarines, and their depôts ; as you will know, they have a very efficient organization, but we would only pay by results, big money for big results ! I think the Germans are using this organization, so it would be a question of the highest bidder !"

Sayed's consummate duplicity may be gauged by the fact that he was corresponding in friendly terms with the High Commissioner and Sir John while a Turkish ship—happily captured by the French—was conveying two Turkish officers and three non-commissioned officers, a large sum in gold, decorations, ammunition and grenades, with an autographed letter from the Sultan acknowledging in handsome terms one he had received from the Sennusi, on whom was now conferred the title of Vizier, with instructions to proclaim a Jihad against Great Britain, France and Russia, backed by the comfortable assurance that the Turk, with a sweep of his hand, would drive the British and French into the sea at Gallipoli : Italy, not having entered the field when the allocution was drafted, was not mentioned further than that the Sennusi was congratulated on having scored off her.

This particular bit of evidence that Sayed was in communication with the Sultan only reached Maxwell on the day of the landing in Suvla Bay, but a month earlier his growing suspicions had been confirmed when Baron von Gumpenberg,<sup>1</sup> under a false name and with a forged

<sup>1</sup> The Baron was detained at Alexandria and by Kitchener's instructions treated as a prisoner of war "without any engagement for the future. It is important the subject of his mission to Sennusi



American passport, had been captured on the high seas after a visit to Tripoli which had undoubtedly been nothing other than an errand to the Sennusi.

"It shows," Maxwell wrote, "what thin ice we are on, and how at any moment Sennusi may declare against us. The Italians are very tiresome and would be delighted to see our relations with Sennusi broken off and for us to pull their Tripolitan and Cyrenaican chestnuts out of the fire. They will make a fuss about the Sennusi getting his foodstuffs from Alexandria and we may be up against another incident."

In August occurred the incident, which a less cautious commander might have construed into a *casus belli*. The Commander of a British submarine, on reaching calm water north-west of Sollum, spied some Arabs on the shore with a European who waved a white flag. He stepped into a rowing-boat alone and was making for what he believed to be a friendly party when he perceived the party to be armed and intuitively decided the European was a German. He hastily began to make his way back when fire was opened on him, which the submarine heartily returned, with the result that a British sailor was killed and a number of Arabs wounded. The Sennusi—who was personally quite dissociated from the outrage—offered the rather lame excuse that Italian warships often fired on the coast and that the aggressors believed themselves to be aiming at an Italian submarine. "The incident," Sir John wrote, "was closed by the acceptance of the Sennusi's profound apologies, and of his assurances that the act had been committed in ignorance that the submarines were British."

The Sennusi's soldiers then set themselves what they were pleased to call night manœuvres, which took the specialized form of training artillery and machine-guns on the Sollum fort at close range.

"Last night," Snow reported on the 29th August, should be exactly ascertained. His present story is evidently made up." (Kitchener to Maxwell.)

“ about ten o'clock, about a hundred men with guns took up a position within a few yards of our fort, whilst others penetrated beyond our sentries, refusing to listen to their orders to return to their own territories, others lined the crest of the hills overlooking Sollum, also some forty armed men marched into our village ; the whole of this force remained in position until early morning. In my earnest desire to keep the peace I took no action to repulse this invasion, but I do trust in you to take such measures as are necessary to put a stop to such unfriendly actions by high officers in your command, and so avoid a possibly regrettable affair.”

While Maxwell was formulating a further, but equally mild, protest against this rather unseemly behaviour, there fell into his hands a packet of letters in which the Sennusi incited Moslem potentates and journalists in Arabia and India to a Jihad, encouraging them with the statement that he was the representative of the Khalifa in Northern Africa.

Despite these vicious pin-pricks, Sir John was still directed and still determined to persevere in anyhow apparent friendly relations, the more so as Great Britain was now engaged in negotiations with the Sherif of Mecca, and it would have been a false step at the moment to incur the enmity of any section of the Arab world.

So long as there was a large force—even if only on paper—in Egypt, the Sennusi thought it well to sit fairly still on his by no means uncomfortable fence, but with the dissipation of the troops in the peninsula and the heavy casualties they were known to be suffering, he inclined more and more to the invitations which the Ottoman Government held out to him ; Sayed was far too clever, and too well-informed, not to realize that the disaffection of the Sherif of Mecca rendered it all the more important for Turkey and Germany to secure his adherence.

Yet so late as the 30th September Colonel Snow was received in frank and friendly fashion by Sayed ; had luncheon with the Jaafar, and left with the impression that

the Sennusi was by no means anxious to fight against England, but that if German money and German agents dragged him into the War, his troops would be formidable opponents.

Three days earlier Maxwell had written to Kitchener : " Both Snow and Royle have been continuously at Sollum. The former will draw up a report for you. Personally I have no doubt that the Sennusi is playing a game beyond his capacity to carry through and has lost a good deal of prestige as a religious leader, though he may have acquired rather more temporal power—his game appears to be to impress on his followers his saintly character and that all Islam is with him and that if he chooses he can swamp Egypt.

" This takes the form of insolence to us in all letters dictated to *katibs*, as he knows the contents will get out amongst his followers : but he also knows that it would be fatal to him to fall out with Egypt and England, so his private letters to us are couched in very different terms.

" He is hard up, and as the Turks and Germans with him are well supplied with money, he plays up to them.

" I think that with money we can persuade him to get rid of these, and whom with luck we might capture on the high seas. It is worth trying. If we go on as we are, I think we can keep the peace.

" As regards the general situation I think there is little doubt that German propaganda has reached both Ali Dinar and Abyssinia ; Wingate seems anxious about both. There is considerable restlessness among Moslems generally.

" The Russian retreat and our own present check in Gallipoli increases this and has had a bad effect.

" The prevailing opinion among a majority here is that the Germans ultimately will win and we be driven out of Egypt. The popular idea is that the Canal will be forced and Sennusi with vast hordes invade simultaneously from the west. I do not know how this gets about, but it is openly talked about.

“The Nationalist party is dormant, but seems to have merged into a pro-Khedival and anti-Sultan party—more or less active, as evidenced by the attempts on the Sultan and Ministers.

“Threatening letters are fairly common. The Bedouin of the West don’t know quite what to make of things or what to believe, so they adopt a ‘wait and see’ policy. This is the most natural consequence of the present state of affairs in Europe and will improve or otherwise with it.

“We are apprehensive of a long winter campaign in Gallipoli. A success there would have an instantaneous effect here. Fortunately, people do not realize that the force here is weak, but of course they cannot help seeing the streams of wounded and sick returning—we have had over 1,500 officers and 60,000 men in Cairo alone—but we live on bluff and I hope we won’t be found out.

“If we can more actively support Idrisi in Asir and force the Sherif of Mecca to act against the Turks—money and arms is all that is wanted—these would have a good effect.

“I also am very strongly of the opinion that the French and ourselves should agree to push the Armenian resistance for all it is worth. We have 500 determined fighters at Port Said and could easily raise another 500. Arm these and put them down near Alexandretta, where they will overrun the mountains and soon make headway and cut the Turkish line of communication with Mesopotamia, Syria, and the Hejaz. I don’t think it would entail any obligation on our part to maintain them, though it would be politic on our part to assist them whenever we conveniently could do so, for they are keen to be allowed to go and take their revenge.”

## CHAPTER XXV

### SOLLUM

IN the first week of November, the Sennusi, heartened by the activity to German submarines along the coast, showed his hand and the long-threatened campaign began. It was at first very spasmodic. The *Tara* and the *Moorina* were torpedoed by enemy submarines ; their crews landing in Cyrenaica were captured and held in durance vile by the Sennusi, who in reply to strong representations made for their release, merely shrugged his shoulders and pleaded ignorance of the occurrence. The next week enemy submarines shelled the Egyptian post at Sollum ; within a few days a British horse transport had been sunk off the Cyrenaican coast, the camp at Sollum had been sniped, 300 Sennusi regulars had seized buildings 50 miles within the Egyptian frontier, and the coastguard barracks at Barani had been attacked.

In view of these circumstances, it was obvious that a state of war must occur, and Maxwell, hurrying his return from Mudros, made arrangements to take action accordingly. The conditions were difficult, and above all things it was important to risk no initial reverse. Sollum, Maxwell considered, was too far from Alexandria and was too vulnerable to submarines to be a suitable base for an expedition and he decided to withdraw the Western frontier posts to Matruh, and there concentrate a force which could be stiffened by small bodies of troops in trawlers, and for which the khedival railway would serve as a second line of communication.

Maxwell believed that he would thus be able to check the enemy at the most westerly point where a suitable harbour could be found—within a night's journey by sea from Alexandria—defensible on the land front ; he would be on ground generally practicable for all arms and fairly well supplied with water ; and as more troops and transport by sea became available, he might be able to land at Sollum and strike at his adversary's main lines of communication. These were the strategical arguments in Maxwell's plan, which it had been the more difficult for him to think out in his temporary absence from Egypt ; but he was also anxious to protect the Egyptian Bedouin of the coastal belt, east of Matruh, if they proved loyal, or to coerce them if they were restive or disaffected, and he was pretty sure that native opinion in the Delta would be favourably influenced by a vigorous offensive policy.

By the 23rd November, the force under Major-General Wallace was concentrated at Alexandria ; the first detachment of the 15th Sikhs—the Sikhs were to suffer rather badly—sailed for Mersa Matruh that night, and on the 7th December, Wallace mustered his men at Mersa Matruh, moving his headquarters that day to Matruh. Considering its restricted size, never perhaps did commander take into action a more “mixed” force, the Composite Brigade of Yeomanry itself being drawn from some twenty regiments ; the Composite Infantry Brigade, under Lord Lucan, consisted of the 6th Royal Scots, 2/7 and 2/8 Middlesex and the 15th Sikhs ; as no Royal Engineers were available, there was a detachment of the Egyptian Army Military Works Department and the 1st Australian Division formed the Divisional train. Various details drawn from various corps had been despatched to make good the Alexandria Dabaa Railway, and to patrol to Maghara Oasis ; a mounted brigade, with the Berkshire Royal Horse Artillery, was set to keep order in the Fagen, and a squadron of Egyptian Army Cavalry and a detachment of the Bikanir Camel Corps

were told to occupy the Wadi Natrun ; and to provide for any " turn-up " among the Arab population of the Western Behera Province, a Composite Battalion was scraped together from details of the 29th Division at Alexandria and detachments sent to Hosh Isa and Damanhum. With the men and means available nothing had been left undone that could be done to forbid any reverse to British arms. One untoward incident occurred, when on the march from the evacuated posts at Bagbag and Sidi Barrani to Matruh, 12 native officers, 2 cadets and 120 other ranks of the Egyptian coastguard deserted, taking with them their arms, equipment and over 150 camels.

Report reached Wallace that the Sennusi was asking for reinforcements from the Commander facing the Italians at Certie, and the Commander determined to strike a rapid, if it could only be a light, blow. On the 11th December he pushed out a column under Colonel Gordon of the Sikhs to disperse an enemy formation reported in the neighbourhood of Beit Hussein and to reconnoitre towards Unjeila. The Cavalry marched well ahead of the column and on reaching Wadi Senaab became sharply engaged with the enemy ; owing to the bad going, the Infantry, though trudging along at their best speed, were unable to give a hand, but a squadron of Artillery Light Horse came up in the afternoon, and with their help the enemy were driven out of the Wadi, shedding at least 100 killed and wounded. The little action, in which the armoured cars of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Corps Division rendered themselves most useful, was successful in itself, but the price paid for it was high, as numbered among the dead was the gallant and trusty Snow,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Two months later Maxwell drafted a memorandum, not of exculpation but of complete justification. " I think that there is some misconception regarding the attitude of certain Anglo-Egyptian officers on the Sennusi question : El Lewa George Hunter Pasha, Lt.-Col. Snow Bey (killed in action), Captain Royle. Their policy has been entirely directed by me, under orders from the War Office. The Sennusi's attitude to the British officers with whom he had contact was arrogant and insolent ; his headquarters at Miscad were

who late in the day fell to the accursed thrust of an Arab, whom he was trying to induce to surrender.

Gordon was instructed to pursue the reconnaissance westward on the next day, but an aeroplane having reported the enemy in some force at Duwan Hill, 7 miles south-west, it was decided to advance on that position. Gordon, though reinforced, was scarcely strong enough for the job ; a sharp, and for a moment critical, action was fought, as 1,200 of the enemy, with a couple of guns, took the offensive, and only the timely arrival of the Notts, R.H.A., and some Australian Light Horse turned what looked like a British reverse into an Arab rout. Maxwell was now clear that, to secure the result—at once

surrounded with armed guards, and no one was admitted without his sanction. He claimed and exercised authority over the Egyptian Western Bedouins through the agency of the Sheikh of Zaweit and armed Muhafizir. Our policy towards him was of the utmost forbearance, and though I personally and repeatedly pointed out to him what the result of his attitude would be, he continued, under the influence of the Turkish-German intrigue, until events occurred which led to our withdrawal from Sollum, and to the present hostilities. The officers whose names I have given, were under no illusion in regard to Sennusi's attitude, and, much to their own personal humiliation, they loyally carried out the orders they received, in spite of continued insults and obstruction. The policy we pursued was part of a general policy of exerting every effort to keep Egypt and the Egyptians out of the horrors of this war. That the policy would have succeeded, in so far as the West is concerned, I have no doubt, had it not been for the ill-success of the Italian policy, and the influence of the Turkish-German agents and propaganda on the ignorant and vain personality of Sayed Ahmed El Sennusi. But the result of all this has clearly shown that it is necessary to create some Government Department to watch over, govern and control our Western Bedouins, and bring them into closer sympathy and touch with the Government of this country ; it has clearly proved that neither the Sheikhs nor Omdahs have any real control or influence over them, and in the past not very much has been done to stimulate their loyalty, and I know of no officials possessing the necessary qualifications to enlist the sympathy of these Bedouins better than Hunter Pasha, Captain Royle, Messrs. Jennings and Bramley, all of whom have devoted much time and trouble to learn their habits, customs, and idiosyncrasies."



rapid and decisive—which he sought, more strength was needed. He therefore stiffened the garrison at Matruh with a battalion of the New Zealand Rifles, and two Naval 4" guns and a Battery of the H.A.C., and learning that a force of about 5,000 men under Jaafar himself was concentrating round Gebel Medwa, 8 miles south-west of Matruh, he directed General Wallace to set his whole force afoot in a summary movement, and arranged that H.M.S. *Clematis* should assist, when opportunity offered, with gunfire from the sea.

On the 3rd December Maxwell had warned the Sennusi thus :

“Greetings :

“On my return to Egypt from visiting the Allied Armies at Gallipoli, I am astonished to find that the situation between us has undergone a change, and that your followers have been guilty of acts of hostility against the Egyptian Government. I was gratified to learn that you sent one of your chief advisers to Burani to endeavour to recall such of your adherents as had flagrantly disobeyed your orders, but was surprised to learn that these were so far out of hand that, not only did they disobey, but actually fired on Jaafar Effendi. I have also learnt with concern that some 79 British subjects, survivors from off a ship that had been torpedoed by enemy submarines, are detained west of our frontier. I must ask you as a proof of the friendly sentiments that you have professed, to cause these unfortunate people to be brought *at once* without harm to Mersa Matruh. The influence at work, headed by Nuri Bey and his German friends, appear to be working, in regard to your person, on similar lines to those on which Enver Pasha treats His Majesty the Sultan of Turkey, which sinister influence has plunged Turkey into this present disastrous war, the end of which will inevitably be the break-up of the Turkish Empire. As you are aware, the Egyptian Government and the British Government have invariably treated you with the greatest consideration and respect, but now owing to the

evil intentions of those around you, I have been obliged to withdraw our post at Sollum, and take up a position at Mersa Matruh ; the responsibility for what follows is on your shoulders, and it is for you to prove, by the actions of yourself and your followers, whether you wish to remain on the same friendly terms, or not. I will now be obliged to view any of your followers that enter Egyptian territory with arms, as having hostile intentions, and will treat them accordingly. I asked you to show your friendly intentions by removing from your entourage those persons who are known to be hostile to us : I regret that you have not been able to do this. I have no doubt that Mohammed Sherif El Idrisi has handed you my letter, and spoken to you on all the affairs that were entrusted to him. He must have explained to you that our intentions have been invariably friendly, and you must realize that it is acts from your side—not from ours—which have brought about the change in our relations. I cannot but think that you have been told stories of the European situation which are not true ; I can only tell you this in all truth, that the German Emperor and his Allies are slowly but surely losing all along the fighting fronts ; but the future will reveal to you what God directs. I ask you to pause and consider that, if you unfortunately take the wrong line, you will have against you—not only Italy, but France, England and Egypt. You will have to take the responsibility of all the lives that will be lost, your people will suffer from starvation (for all supplies will be cut off), the coasts will be blockaded, and if your advisers trust in enemy submarines, they will depend on nothing. I am telling you all of these things, not as threats, but as a friend, who would be sorry to see misfortune overtake you and your people. The situation cannot continue as it is ; and I ask you to prove your good intentions by acts, not words, and to return to me at once at Mersa Matruh the shipwrecked Englishmen whom I know are west of our frontier, and to re-establish friendly relations with us, by dismissing from your territory those Turkish and German

advisers,—Nuri Bey, Manesmann and others, who will most certainly bring you and your people into great trouble. I hope, therefore, that you will give these matters your earnest consideration, before such harm is done as cannot be remedied.”

The reply was to hand on the 23rd of December and Maxwell wrote to Kitchener :

“ Mohammed Idrisi who was sent by me with letters to Sennusi returned with his answers and also brought a letter to you which I enclose herewith. These letters are defiant, insolent and unsatisfactory.

“ His hand has been forced, but there is no doubt that he is preparing for and meant to be hostile, he intended to make trouble where the Turks were (as he thinks in six weeks’ time) attacking the Canal.

“ Since we left Sollum he has followed us up and is now with about 3,000 followers, all armed with rifles and about 12 guns of sorts, just outside Merra Metrak. General Wallace is there with a sufficiently strong force. He has had two scraps with the Sennusi, and reports that they are well trained, fight well, but except machine-guns, which are well handled, the musketry and gun-fire is poor.

“ All the Bedouins now west of us are hostile, east of us they are not friendly but not yet openly hostile, and I do not doubt that unless Wallace inflicts a smashing blow to those in his vicinity they will join Sennusi. Of course all supplies have been stopped going West. Very soon Sennusi will be in difficulties for food. He is reported to intend to concentrate in the Baharia Oasis and means to operate against Upper Egypt and draw supplies from there. He shows no signs of any intention to give up the shipwrecked Britishers who are in his hands and has removed inland.”

“ Generals and Staff flocking in,” is an entry for December 29th in a Staff Officer’s diary, “ an odd situation with ample room for friction of which so far there is

none. We are asked to send round a circular as to the vital importance of saying no word how the withdrawal was achieved, in view of the further retirement from Helles. Rather lucky that the withdrawal should have coincided with Xmas Day knock to the Sennusi."

On Xmas Day was fought the action in which, where all were more than brave, Gordon and his 15th Sikhs and the New Zealanders primarily distinguished themselves; the "knock" drove the Sennusi and his Staff and the shattered remains of his force, headlong to Unjeila and left Wallace free to deal with the situation between Matruh and Dabaa, to be quickly cleared up by a small column under Lord Lucan. Minor operations conducted in abominable weather filled in the first three weeks of January, but on the 19th aeroplanes detected a considerable body at Halazin, 25 miles south-west of Matruh, the camp containing at least 100 European and 250 Bedouin tents, one of which, according to the observer, was certainly that of the Grand Sennusi. Wallace waited a couple of days to enjoy the addition to his force of a battalion of the South African Infantry Brigade, and on the 23rd, at Halazin, delivered the Sennusi so resounding a blow as not only to dishearten the chieftain himself, but to shake very ostensibly the faith of his followers.

"If only," Maxwell wrote, in alluding again to Gordon's admirable leading and the superb behaviour of the Sikhs, "greater mobility had allowed a more thorough pursuit, the success obtained, alas at rather heavy cost in brave lives, might well have meant an even speedier end to the campaign."

Sir John now bent himself to the re-occupation of Sollum, and as Wallace was paying the price in health for an arduous and most satisfactory spell of work, Major-General W. E. Peyton was to add to the laurels he had already gained with his dismounted "mounted troops" at Gallipoli.

Peyton had a favourable start in that when on the

10th February he "took over" his command the further considerable provision of camel transport would cause his force to be entirely mobile, and he could thus follow up any success he might score without having to return to Matruh, as heretofore, after each engagement. Thus the re-occupation of Sollum, which the War Office favoured, was rendered quite feasible, and to make preparations for it Maxwell and his Chief of the Staff, General Malcolm, on the 1st February, repaired to Matruh and there took counsel with Wallace, who had not yet left, and with Commander Eyres Monsell.<sup>1</sup> Information was to the effect that the main hostile force was somewhere near Barrani, another small body being encamped at Sollum. Maxwell had to decide, and to decide quickly, whether he would attack at Barrani and at the same hour land a force at Sollum, or whether he would operate entirely by land and use Barrani, when in his hands, as a base to supply so far as possible by sea : in either case he knew he could count on the whole-hearted help of the Navy. The main consideration to forbid the first course, was that Sollum Bay being crowned by heights, and with mines at its mouth which must be removed, a surprise landing was out of the question and a heavy bill of casualties, from which a humane commander would surely shrink, seemed inevitable. Maxwell therefore decided to use the land route only ; despite the infrequency of wells and various natural difficulties which it would require some doggedness to overcome, supplies would be put into Barrani and Sollum as soon as they were in British occupation. Having made up his mind, he steeled it against any counter-arguments, of which several were lodged, and returned to Cairo to interview, and issue instructions to, Peyton, whose first duty would be to deal with whatever force was covering Barrani, occupy that place and equip it as a depot for the further move of about 50 miles to Sollum.

On the eve of the march to Matruh, news was received

<sup>1</sup> Chief Whip to the Conservative party in 1921.

that an enemy force of about 1,000 men was in the Baharia Oasis, some 200 miles south-west of Cairo ; their camp received the immediate attention of our aeroplanes, whereupon the troops scattered and by taking refuge with the inhabitants, sheltered themselves from attack. A fortnight later, about the 27th February, it was known that the more southerly oases of Farafia and Dakhla had been occupied.

“ All reports,” Maxwell wrote, “ were to the effect that an orderly form of Government had been set up ; indeed, in most cases the Egyptian officials are believed to be carrying on their ordinary duties, but a few Copts have been induced to embrace the Moslem faith.”

This *démarche* of the enemy had been quite reckoned with, and Sir John had sought the sanction of the War Office to organize a command for the defence of the southern provinces in Egypt, under Major-General Sir John Adye,<sup>1</sup> who with his Headquarters at Ben Suef, arranged an excellent system of patrols from the Fayoum to Assiat. Later on, when Peyton had done his work in the North, and forbidden the enemy to give any trouble along the coast, the “ centre of gravity ” shifted southward, and it became incumbent on Adye to strengthen and extend his defensive line, so that when Maxwell handed over his responsibilities to Sir Archibald Murray, the detachment farthest south was at Esna.

With Dakhla in his opponent's grasp, Maxwell withdrew the Civil officials from the Kharga Oasis ; he had of course to ask himself whether it would be better to hold the oasis and ward off attacks on it, or to withdraw from it everything that could be of any use to the enemy, and restrict his activities to occasional patrols. He did not minimize the strategical importance of the oasis, but he was sure that to undertake any enterprise distant from the Nile Valley would mean “ asking for trouble,” the more so as he was never quite sure as to the numerical strength

<sup>1</sup> Adye was an old friend, as Maxwell had known him since 1882 when he was A.D.C. to Lord Wolseley.

on which he could depend ; Adye was therefore bidden to confine himself to purely defensive measures, but to have ready a small, and very mobile, column with which he could strike a smart blow should the enemy approach the cultivation. The oases were of course kept under the constant observation of aeroplanes, and very long flights being necessary, a system of advanced depots in the desert was established, the credit for which, Maxwell insisted, was due to Captain Rynefeld, R.F.C., and Mr. Bramley, of the Sudan Civil Service, whose names came into notice on the occasion of a remarkable flight of the former to Qara.

To return to Peyton, whose first step was to fix on Unjeila as an intermediate, and exactly half-way, depot, between Matruh and Barrani, and who, with the arrival at Matruh of the 3rd Battalion of South African Infantry, could launch a competent force, under a more than competent leader, Brigadier-General Lukin, with the mandate to seize Barrani at the earliest possible moment. Lukin moved off from Matruh on the 20th February<sup>1</sup> ; on the morrow he sent back word that the enemy was lying at Agagia, 14 miles south-east of Barrani, and that Nuri Bey and Jaafar Pasha were both in the camp, although Sayed Ahmed had betaken himself to Siwa to busy himself with further nefarious plans against Egypt. Lukin disposed himself for a night march on the 25th to insure an attack at dawn on the 26th, but Jaafar—who throughout, both in his leading and his training, did full justice to his German military education—upset the plan by coming forward and opening fire on the British camp in the afternoon. Lukin, therefore, postponed his movement till the following morning, and the Yeomanry having seized a hill, 4,000 yards north of the enemy's position, his attack—in which the 3rd South African Infantry

<sup>1</sup> His force consisted of a squadron of the Royal Bucks Yeomanry, the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, the Notts Battery R.H.A., the 1st South African Brigade, less a couple of battalions, and the 1/6 Royal Scots.

advanced in the centre with mounted troops and armoured cars on the flank—developed a little before noon, and despite a sharp attempt to outflank his left, before the afternoon sun began to sink, he was in possession of the enemy's position, and what was even more important, of Jaafar Pasha's person. The story of the pursuit, on which Maxwell always delighted to dwell, and in which the Dorset Yeomanry, under Colonel Souter, won for themselves an imperishable name, was thus simply told by their leader :

"About 1 p.m. I received a message from the G.O.C. saying that he wished me to pursue and to cut off the enemy if possible. It was my intention to let the enemy get clear of the sandhills, where there might have been wire or trenches, and then to attack him in the open. I therefore pursued on a line parallel to, and about 1,000 yards west of, the line of retreat, attacking with dismounted fire wherever the horses wanted an easy. About 2 p.m. I saw for the first time the whole retreating force extend for about a mile with a depth of 300 to 400 yards. In front were the camels and baggage, escorted by irregulars, with their proper fighting force (Mahafza) and maxims forming their rear- and flank-guard. I decided to attack mounted. About 3 p.m. I dismounted for the last time to give my horses a breather, and to make a careful examination of the ground over which I was about to move. By this time the Dorset Regiment was complete, and as the squadron of the Bucks Yeomanry had gone on ahead and could not be found, I attacked with Dorsets alone. The attack was made in two lines, the horses galloping steadily, and well in hand. Three maxims were brought into action against us, but the men were splendidly led by their squadron and troop leaders, and their behaviour was admirable. About 50 yards from the position I gave the order to charge, and with one yell the Dorsets hurled themselves upon the enemy, who immediately broke. In the middle of the enemy's lines my horse was killed



under me, and, by a curious chance, his dying strides brought me to the ground within a few yards of the Sennusi General, Jaafar Pasha.

“It is difficult accurately to express the effect of this cavalry charge on the enemy. Throughout the day he had fought with extreme boldness, but when the horses got into him, he had only one thought, and that was to get away.”

The Dorsets were to pay for their gallantry with a lamentable loss of officers and men, but the success of the day, to which they so largely contributed, was undeniable, and after Agaginja, the Sennusi's men declined to stand up to the British. The capture of Jaafar—who after a period of confinement at Cairo was to emerge in quite another character—was not the least important result of the charge; deprived of his skill and the forceful qualities of his character, the Sennusi lost in incalculable degree what served to make him a dangerous foe.

For the march from Barrani to Sollum, Peyton rejected the khedival road and chose the route by which he would mount the plateau through the Median Pass 20 miles south-east of Sollum; by perching himself on the high ground, he would deny the enemy the advantages to be gained from what would otherwise be a dominating position at Sollum. Peyton assured Maxwell that, with care, sufficient water would be forthcoming on the way for man and beast, and, so as not to draw the wells dry, he decided to move his force in two echelons.

Lukin moved out on the 9th March and was told to wend his way through the Nagb-Median Pass and set foot on the plateau; the second column, comprised of mounted troops, was put under orders to leave two days later and reach Augerin on the day after Lukin had established himself; thus it was calculated that the whole

force would rendezvous at Augerin with its outposts on the high ground ready to pounce on Bir Warr and Msead. But the plan was frustrated by a rather belated report on the 12th as to insufficiency of water; the supply at Augerin was found to be scanty, while the cisterns at Median and Siwiat were reported to be nearly dry. By now the armoured cars had reached the plateau, using the most westerly pass.<sup>1</sup> Telephone conversation, cleverly intercepted at Barrani, went to show that the enemy was in two minds as to whether to stand still or bolt, and an officer of the Royal Engineers, Captain Blunt, was suddenly able to say that a cistern at Alim Tejdid contained enough water for two battalions for one night. Peyton still—and very rightly—shrank from incurring the losses inherent in an attack on the Sollum heights from the coastline, more especially as he had already made good a footing on the plateau. But, here was the crux; on the inland route he would only be able to water part of his troops. He quickly made up his mind that Lukin should take two battalions, the armoured cars, the Camel Corps Company and the mountain guns along the top of the escarpment, while the remainder of the force would move by the coast. Before midnight on the 13th Lukin was at Siwiat with some of his people at Alim Tejdid, and the horsemen at Bagbag. Early on the 14th both columns started towards Sollum and at 9 a.m. aeroplane reconnaissance reported that the enemy was evacuating his camp, and it only remained for Peyton to join hands with Lukin on the high ground and send the Duke of Westminster with his armoured cars in pursuit of a body of the enemy who had halted some 20 miles to the west.<sup>2</sup> The potential value of these cars had been

<sup>1</sup> Reserve of Officers, R.H.G.

<sup>2</sup> It was impossible for the cars to reach the plateau except at one place, and as this was only a camel track and had never been negotiated by any vehicle, the Duke of Westminster suggested the ascent should be made in the dark; thus the Sennusi would be unaware of their opponents' dangerous proximity and might delay their retreat long enough to render their capture all the easier.

represented to Kitchener by Maxwell at Mudros, and the Secretary of State immediately on his return to London detached a battery from the Army in France and placed it under the Duke of Westminster. The cars on arrival in Egypt were closely inspected by the G.O.C. and forwarded to the Commander in the field with the prophetic suggestion that they would prove a very valuable asset. The armoured cars on the 14th at once gave chase, and came up with the fugitive force at Biragig well. The surprise was complete and the crews of the armoured cars, 34 in all, accounted for all the enemy's guns and machine-guns, together with 300,000 rounds of ammunition and large supplies of gun ammunition, together with 40 prisoners, including three Turkish officers. To do the gunners, who were all Turks, justice, they stood their ground well and ranked among the enemy's losses of 50 killed and many wounded. The reoccupation of Sollum, and the handiwork of the armoured cars, completed the defeat of the northern column; Maxwell could report that within three weeks Peyton's force had cleared the country of all resistance, had laid hands on the Commander, taken all his guns, and driven his forces as dust before the wind far beyond the Egyptian frontier.

But one more duty, in the nature of an errand of mercy, had to be done, and Maxwell's plea for the armoured cars was again to bear fruit. A searching examination of the prisoners taken on the 14th proved that somewhere in Cyrenaica, the name of a well being given, the Sennusi held in durance vile some 90 prisoners, survivors from the *Tara* and *Moorina* which had been torpedoed in November. To leave them to their plight was unthinkable; their rescue was a hazardous matter, but Westminster had little difficulty in securing Peyton's consent to make the attempt. The difficulties were the greater because the distances were a matter of speculation; the chief informant on the point was an individual who vaguely remembered having grazed cattle near the well some thirty years previously; he now offered to act as guide,

and there occurred the episode which made a stir even through the British lines drawn within a few yards of a fierce and formidable foe.

At 3 a.m. on the 17th the cortège consisting of 41 motor vehicles, armoured cars and ambulances started, Westminster leading in a touring car. After a 70 miles' run the road was exchanged for a desert trail and the drivers had to steer a course of over 100 miles of unmapped and unknown country, until there came in sight a mound with a large group of men silhouetted against the sky. "It must be them," leapt to the lips of the rescuers, for if news of the fight of the 14th had been forthcoming, the unhappy men would surely have been removed. The rescuers raced forward and in a few minutes, while the prisoners, most of them weak from dysentery and all ragged and emaciated, were devouring food and donning hospital suits, the guards were being chased and, as they opened fire, shot down. The cars with their precious load of 91 English sailors, saved from something worse than death, started back at sunset : tyre troubles which at other times would have seemed more than vexatious, were made light of, and, by 2 a.m. on the 18th, Peyton was telegraphing to Maxwell for transmission to England a startling message of good news. The young Duke had already been recommended for the D.S.O. for his gallantry and resource on three occasions, and Maxwell, in the course of a despatch, now wrote : "A less determined and resourceful commander might well have shirked the responsibility of taking motor-cars, on the first occasion, 30 miles, and on the second, 115 miles, into an unknown desert with all the uncertainty of the cars being able to negotiate the country or the amount of resistance that was likely to be encountered. I venture to think that these actions constitute a record in the history of war. The Duke of Westminster's modest account of his exploits I cannot improve on, therefore forward them for Your Lordship's approval. Major-General Peyton recommends that the name of Major the

Duke of Westminster be submitted to His Majesty the King for a Victoria Cross in recognition of his gallantry in rescuing no less than ninety-one imprisoned British subjects. I feel I am in duty bound to forward this recommendation, for it was entirely due to the Duke of Westminster that this magnificent enterprise was brought to a successful conclusion ; had this opportunity been missed or had there been any hesitation in decision, it is possible that these unfortunate people might never have been heard of again. Because so much depended on this decision, I have no hesitation in forwarding Major-General Peyton's recommendation for Your Lordship's consideration.

" Captain Royle of the Egyptian Coast Guards also deserves commendation for his conspicuous services throughout this successful campaign. Since I left Egypt I have heard with great satisfaction that the remaining two Britishers that were for some reason absent from Bir Hakim on the 18th inst., have safely reached Italian territory ; thus the whole of the shipwrecked Britishers in the Sennusi's hands are accounted for."

Had Kitchener lived Maxwell's recommendation would surely have received favourable consideration, as, apart from its merits, the deed of daring had a most healthy effect in certain rather disaffected Egyptian quarters. But in the summer successive acts of superb gallantry on the Somme were almost piled upon one another and the supreme military award had to be very sparingly granted.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### RECALL OF SIR JOHN

WITH the evacuation of Anzac and Suvla there was a shuffling of posts and the headquarters of M.E.F. moved from Lemnos to Egypt, where its chief functions would now lie. Sir Charles Monro returned to France to take over the First Army from which Haig had been transferred to supreme command ; Birdwood remained for a while in control of the Gallipoli force, and M'Mahon was to look after the troops in Salonika. The idea was now mooted at home that Maxwell's time must be fully taken up with the internal military affairs of Egypt and with activities on the Western frontier, and that he would be over-burdened if he were asked to control, reorganize and administer the large force now assembling in the Canal Zone. How far this view was correct or how far it was coloured by the desire to find employment for Sir Archibald Murray, who had just concluded his brief tenure as C.I.G.S., is open to surmise. Anyhow, Sir Archibald arrived in Cairo on the 19th January with the rank of full General, and special, if not very explicit, instructions in his pocket. He was to reorganize, refit and command the troops arriving, and to arrive, in Egypt ; he was to make himself responsible for the defence of the Canal, and generally to supervise the force at Salonika. He was to make his own arrangements with Maxwell as to what troops the latter should command for the protection of the Western frontier and the maintenance of order in Egypt, and the two were to settle the line of demarcation between the M.E.F. and the

force in Egypt. So far as possible, Murray was to keep all formed divisions directly under his own orders, while Maxwell would claim unattached brigades and units.

One main point was open to no doubt. Murray found the Canal in a state of great activity ; he was bound to admit that the foundations of the new scheme of defence had been well and truly laid, and that any new Commander and Staff would have found it exceedingly difficult to do in such good time and with such good will all that Maxwell had done, and to set in motion the complicated machinery required for a very elaborate system. The arrangement under which Maxwell was in command in Egypt, except for the Canal, anyhow secured his presence in the country at a very trying moment, and to keep Maxwell in Egypt as long as possible was for Kitchener a prime object. But difficulties inherent in a dual command would be sure to arise, and whatever the courtesy displayed by the two Staffs, friction would be inevitable ; there was obviously no room for two Generals, but the question was pertinently—and in Egypt rather indignantly—asked, why the General, who knew everything worth knowing about Egypt, was to be replaced in a time of fiery trial by a General who was a brilliant Staff Officer, but whose popularity,<sup>1</sup> alike with the troops and the Egyptians, could be open to doubt, and whose personal influence with the latter could not be other than negligible.

Maxwell at once warned the War Office that the proposed arrangement would prove unworkable, especially as the actual base and communications of the M.E.F. would be in his area ; in the public interest, as well as for the sake of the public purse, it would be better for him to

<sup>1</sup> “ Murray is not easy to get on with,” wrote an important official in August, 1916, “ and matters are complicated by his sitting down at Ismailia, so that one can never get at him : he is pleasant enough when one can. One cannot pretend that he is popular with any section of the civilian and military, and his last ukase that it is not ‘ congruous ’ for officers to attend races, play cricket or polo, or dance, has raised a storm, none the less violent for being suppressed,”

be recalled. "I feel rather 'Mazlum'," he wrote on January 8th, "at the way the W.O. have treated me over this appointment of Murray. I do not question the facts, but it is the way I have been treated! Sir Charles Monro, Sir H. M'Mahon, Altham, are communicated with and I am ignored. Personal matters and feelings do not count, but I feel so strongly that it is unfair on the service, and on everyone here, to attempt to run independent commands. It can't be done without creating impossible situations and an 'impasse'. Therefore, as all the indications, that have been vouchsafed me, show that Sir A. Murray is independent, I feel that I am in the way, and therefore think that I ought to be recalled." Kitchener, in a private telegram, urged him to stay on, believing that every day he remained in Egypt was, in a sense, a day gained. "You will find Murray," the S. of S. almost pleaded, "an extremely nice officer to work with, and I feel sure that no one can pull together the troops leaving Gallipoli better than he can." To ease matters Maxwell was also promoted locally and personal relations were thus adjusted. "I hate making difficulties," he wrote on the 19th January, "but you will understand that with another General senior to me exercising command in Egypt my position became not only impossible but ridiculous, and in the eyes of everyone here I was discredited and superseded. So I am glad this will be put right. The situation is difficult enough and anomalous as it is, for the tentacles of the Octopus Levbase and L. of C. Medforce permeate my command, and though I have no fear that Murray, myself and the senior Staff Officers will work harmoniously for the common good, there must be overlapping and a certain amount of friction amongst the Junior Staff and Regimental Officers. They all look upon Medforce as the fighting force and therefore, as is the habit of British officers, all want to belong to it and not to the shelved force in Egypt; these add to one's difficulties. Murray himself told me that the question was discussed at home and that the decision was that if he



was promoted I would be too, therefore the shock was great when I learnt he was and I was not. You can rely on my doing my utmost to work smoothly, and as I take it the policy is to prepare an Army under Murray for any exigency that may arise, either here or elsewhere ; I will keep that in mind. I will do nothing in the way of re-organization without consulting Murray and I am sure he will do nothing that affects my command without consulting me. I would not be human if I did not feel somewhat hurt at the arrangement made by the War Office without a word to me. It came as a surprise and I could not but feel that I had lost the confidence of the Army Council. But now that it is done and the question of promotion put right, I will loyally abide by the situation and make the best of it. Murray tells me that at any moment, if the Turkish invasion fizzles out, he may be ordered away with his Army, therefore I presume I must organize more or less so that I can hold the Canal Lines when that eventuality comes off."

However the writer's rank was raised, his responsibilities were greatly shrunk, and his conviction grew daily stronger that this particular work could be far better done by two hands than by four ; above all, there was ever present the dread of dire confusion should, at any moment, actual fighting occur. Sir John was more than willing to efface himself at once, but knowing the store which the " Chief " set on having him, in any capacity, in Egypt, he stuck steadily to his post for a month or more, his tact and good-humour standing him in stead to check excessive overlapping of duties and to prevent anything like personal hostility in carrying them out.

There then came to hand a letter from the Chief of the Staff<sup>1</sup> : " Nothing would please me better than to receive an official letter from you saying that the system is unworkable. Until you or Murray say this, of course I can do nothing. So long as there is no fighting you will perhaps be able to muddle along, but I am horrified as to the

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Robertson.

idea of what might happen in that event. The anomaly is of the most pernicious type, and it causes a tremendous amount of trouble here as well with you. We never know where we are or what we are dealing with, and we never can know so long as there are two Commanders. The system is also bad from an economical point of view. . . . I hope you will soon break up the various scallywag detachments that are annoying you, and I am sure that you will keep in view the necessity of not committing us to operations on an extended scale beyond what is necessary to clear away the annoyance. We want to get as many troops as we can to the Western Front of course, because that is where a decision must be sought. There is a good deal of trouble in these days in Persia and Afghanistan, and it is by no means unlikely that we may have to send further troops to India. The Turks and Germans are very busy in Persia and also in Afghanistan. I shall always be most glad to help you in every way I can as I am to help every other commander, and I feel that you will also help me by keeping in view the broad aspects of the War. Briefly stated, they are to get every possible man, horse and gun on the Western Front. We must chance something somewhere."

In pursuance of this allocution, the Chief of the Staff, independently of the Secretary of State, repaired to the Prime Minister and urged that the anomaly should cease, and that, as Murray could not be deprived of a command he had so recently received, Maxwell should be allowed, or asked, to come away. From a purely military point of view Robertson's arguments may have been irrefutable, and anyhow Kitchener would not fall foul of them, although, looking far forward, his eyes rested on troubles ahead. He had lived to see Egypt steered through eighteen critical months so adroitly that her population, far from any display of bitterness or resentment at what they might well regard as encroachments on their rights and customs, exhibited nothing but affection for the man whose hand was as steady as it was kind. Kitchener did

not live to see the unrest and disaffection, the internal irritation, the riots and bloodshed so soon to be the lot of the country to which he had given the best years of his life ; but when the unhappy happened there were many to endorse his judgment that in Egypt the presence of a man who is really liked and wholly trusted may prove a more efficient solvent for troubles than any form of legislature or force of arms.

On the 10th March came the mandate : “ Now that the situation in Egypt is clearer and a gradual reduction of the troops there is being made, His Majesty’s Government have decided to unite the Imperial troops remaining in Egypt under one command and General Sir A. J. Murray has been selected as General Officer Commanding in Chief. You will therefore be good enough to transfer to him all the troops hitherto commanded by you as soon as you can mutually arrange and then return home.”

After consultation with the Sultan, Maxwell had made arrangements for calling up the reserve of the Egyptian Army ; four days after the receipt of the telegram of recall came the good tidings from Sollum, and he now had only to render one more service, and one which was wholly agreeable. The Prince of Wales was to visit Egypt, and the various arrangements—the more difficult as the arrival was to be kept a profound secret—fell to the outgoing General. Before the Prince left England the King had vetoed his suggestion that he should extend his journey to the Sudan as involving too long an absence from his appointed post in France. But an amiable conspiracy of Kitchener in London, Maxwell in Cairo, and Wingate in Khartoum sufficed to induce the Sovereign to withdraw his interdict and the Heir Apparent’s debut in the North of Africa proved to be neither the least happy nor the least useful of his public appearances.

With the news of Maxwell’s recall there arose a burst of sympathy not unmingled with indignation and embittered

by a vague sense of wrong. To the inhabitants of Cairo Sir John was the embodiment of efficiency, justice and human kindness. They remembered that his hand was unsparing in meting out right and in redressing wrong ; they remembered also many such incidents as when he had halted troops on the march to pay an act of reverence to the passing funeral of a humble native. They knew how a year ago he had been competent to ward off danger from without, and the better-informed were sure that his new efforts would render the banks of the Nile impregnable. Only the other day because it was he who had mobilized the Egyptian reserve, the Council of Egyptian Ministers had declined proposals of pay and said it would be an honour for men to take, if called upon, a share in the defence of the country ; only the other day, again, he had protested against any landing at Jeddah because the Moslem world might think this would infringe the British guarantee of the inviolability of the Holy Places. The new General might be a military genius and might be going to lead troops to victory, but "*le mieux est l'enemi du bien*," and from the Egyptian point of view Murray could be no improvement on the "Maxaweel" in whom the Egyptians had blind confidence ; there are no friends like old friends would seem to be the local summing-up of conditions imposed just now on Egyptians under which a soldier who was their own familiar friend was to be superseded by a soldier whom few of them would ever come to know even by sight. Popular opinion may have been at fault, but it was undoubtedly unanimous, and the only doubt was how to express it in adequate terms.

A huge tea-party organized by distinguished Egyptians took place at the Continental Hotel on the 20th March. To it flocked over a thousand persons of all colours and creeds, the Sheikhs in their flowing robes lending a picturesque touch to an occasion which perhaps only modern Egypt could present. An address, read by Prince Ahmed Fuad, was punctuated with cheers, and when Maxwell rose to say a few simple words, he received an

ovation such as few Englishmen are likely to experience at an Oriental assembly. "You have everything in your favour," he reminded them with that optimism which was always genuine if not always quite justifiable ; "you must be loyal to yourselves and loyal to your ruler, and may God favour this country as He has always been pleased to favour it." Outside the Hotel there was to be a demonstration which, if possible, was even more to his liking ; and as the General's car made its way slowly through the throngs of natives gathered in the streets, ample testimony was given of the place he had in their thoughts and affections.

Two days later the train steamed out from a platform crowded to capacity, and as the good folk on it slowly dispersed into the highways, the burden of their lament was that "Maxaweel" had been taken from them, just when they wanted him most, and that no one could tell them the reason why.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE IRISH REBELLION

“ I HAVE been in a nursing home for the past ten days for a complete overhaul, as it was thought I had stone. But happily I am passed fit. I am idle and I fear likely to be. As the political people have got their knives into me. They made an impossible situation in Egypt and I could not with due regard to the public welfare continue to be an expense to the country there.” Such was Maxwell’s mild jeremiad addressed to his friend Unsworth on the 19th April, 1916.

But the bread of idleness was not for long to be his fare. On the evening of the 23rd of April there was flashed to London the news that nothing less than an insurrection had broken out in Ireland, and that the King’s subjects in Dublin were in peril of their lives.

“ I made an untrue estimate of the possibility of a disturbance of the kind which has occurred in Dublin, and of the mode of warfare—if such an expression can be used with regard to it—which has been pursued, of the desperate folly displayed by the leaders and their dupes which has resulted in the death of officers and soldiers as well as of inspectors, sergeants and constables of the Royal Irish Constabulary.”

So ran the simple, straightforward and all-sorrowful words of the Chief Secretary, Mr. Augustine Birrell, when—so soon as he was assured that the revolt was entirely stifled—he announced his resignation in the House of Commons.

Early in March, however, *The Times* newspaper had

drawn attention to the growth of the Sinn Fein movement and had suggested that very scanty measures were being locally taken to suppress the disaffection obviously brewing in Ireland. On this Easter Monday the total of troops in Dublin Barracks did not exceed 2,000 men, of whom not a few were untrained ; at noon that day Dublin Castle was attacked by armed Sinn Feiners, while a large body of men identified with their interests occupied Stephen's Green, seized the Post Office to cut the telegraph and telephone wires, and forced their way into houses in Sackville Street, Abbey Street, and along the quays. Simultaneously other risings, if of a less serious character, took place at Ardee, in County Louth, and at Swords and Lusk near Dublin. The rebels, who for the most part eschewed uniforms, inaugurated their revolt by shooting down in cold blood soldiers and unarmed policemen, while their rapid concentration and seizure of various buildings was in some degree due to the permission given to Sinn Feiners, the Citizen Army and other organizations to drill, hold processions, and otherwise prepare themselves to create civil strife. Troops hurriedly arrived from Belfast, a mobile column was forthcoming from the Curragh, and Lord French, then in command of the Home Forces, promptly arranged for the despatch of two brigades of the 59th Division and warned the Cavalry at Aldershot that they might be required.

By the 26th a cordon was being drawn round the centre of the town from the north bank of the river to enclose the area of the rebellion. The situation, however, remained serious. Street fighting had been of a confused and bloody character, casualties, which eventually totalled 1,315, had been many, and on the 27th the Irish Executive decided to proclaim martial law over the whole country, and to ask for some General Officer of high standing to be invested with plenary powers whose instructions they would carry out to the letter.

Kitchener had rightly thought that to deal with Egypt in the hours of Egypt's danger, Maxwell was the only

possible choice. He was now equally sure that Maxwell's insight into, and sympathy with, racial characteristics, his fearlessness as to assuming responsibility, and his strong common sense flavoured by imperturbable good humour, marked him as a man to deal, and deal promptly, with an occasion fraught with danger for Ireland herself, and, unless quickly checked, not unlikely to have sinister effect on the conduct of the War.

Work of any sort was always congenial to a keen and competent workman, and for the work now to his hand, Maxwell must have known himself to be specially fitted. Only one drawback, and that a grave one, existed. Lady Maxwell was about to undergo a serious operation, and ties of deepest affection tempted him for a moment to say that his place was at her side. But only for a moment. The call of duty was clear and pressing, and pausing only for news as to his wife's condition to be supplied to him by cipher and to enlist General Hutchison as his Chief Staff Officer, he was on his way to the scene of trouble within a few hours of his appointment.

The appointment was defined in a letter from the Secretary of the War Office to Lord French. "I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that Lieutenant-General Sir John Maxwell has been appointed General Officer Commanding the Forces in Ireland from the 27th inclusive. His Majesty's Government desire that in this capacity Sir John Maxwell will take all such measures as may in his opinion be necessary for the prompt suppression of insurrection in Ireland, and be accorded a free hand in regard to the movement of all troops now in Ireland or which may be placed under his command hereafter, and also in regard to such measures as may seem to him advisable under the proclamation dated 26th April issued under the Defence of the Realm Act." <sup>1</sup>

1

WAR OFFICE,

30th April, 1916.

THE ARMY COUNCIL under the powers conferred on them by Regulation 62, Defence of the Realm Regulations, hereby appoint

L.S.J.M.

R



Maxwell arrived at North Wall in the very early hours of the 28th to hear that many buildings in Sackville Street were still burning fiercely, that Sackville Street and the Four Courts were still in rebel hands, and that disquieting, if rather indefinite, reports were streaming in from Counties Dublin, Meath, Galway, Wexford, Clare and Kelly. Heedless of the bullets that were flying about, he drove directly with Hutchison and his A.D.C., Prince Alexander of Battenberg,<sup>1</sup> to the Headquarters of the Irish Command, and at once bent himself to his work.<sup>2</sup> The

Lieutenant-General Sir J. Maxwell, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland, to be a Competent Military Authority under these Regulations ; with power to delegate, either unconditionally or subject to such conditions as he may think fit, all or any of his powers under these Regulations to any officer qualified to be appointed a Competent Military Authority.

<sup>1</sup> Created Marquis of Carisbrooke, June, 1917 ; he had also served as A.D.C. to Sir John for a few months in Egypt.

<sup>2</sup>

" 28th/16.

" DUBLIN.

" We arrived at 2 a.m. From the sea it looked as if the entire city of Dublin was in flames, but when we got to North Wall it was not quite so bad as that, yet a great deal of the part north of the Liffey was burning. Bullets were flying about, the crackle of musketry and machine-gun fire breaking out every other minute.

" We were met by three motors and drove up to the Royal Hospital. The town is piquetted with soldiers and most of the rebels are in a ring fence and we are gradually closing on to them. I think after to-morrow it will be clearer, but a lot of men will be knocked over.

" These infernal rebels have got a lot of rifles and apparently a fair supply of ammunition.

" Everything is hung up, no food or supplies of any sort can be got, it is not safe to walk into the town. Grafton Street and all the shop part has to be cleared of these infernal fellows who have occupied a certain number of houses and snipe anyone who passes.

" I saw the Lord Lieutenant and Mr. Birrell to-day, they do not altogether appreciate being under my orders, but I told them I did not mean to interfere unless it was necessary and I hoped they would do all I asked them to. The Sinn Feiners are all over Ireland and when we have done with them in Dublin we will have to clear the out-stations. But from all I can gather the nerve centre of the movement is in Dublin and in that part which we have surrounded.

" I got your telegram through Sir G. Arthur to-day, I am glad you

immediate matter was to set his heel on the Dublin rebels, the symbol and the focus of the whole movement, and to do this as speedily and with as little loss of life and destruction of property as possible. Military service can scarcely find any duty more distasteful or disconcerting than the suppression of armed revolt in a great city ; in fighting of this sort the soldier sacrifices much of what discipline and training have taught him, manœuvre is a dead letter, and, man for man, the civilian with a rifle to his shoulder and a wall or barricade in front of him, is fully, if foully, a match for the professional soldier. Here also was super-added the difficulty that for fear of killing innocent men, women and children, artillery could scarcely be used to batter down walls and improvised rebel fortresses. Maxwell must first localize the "infected patches," surround them with cordons of troops, cut communications between the rebels and their sympathizers, and block any outlet for escape ; to destroy these "infected patches" a house-to-house search was obviously necessary in which the soldiers must take the risk of being shot down by armed civilians. Orders were issued to close in on Sackville Street from east and west, and for the 2/4th Lincolns to form a cordon along the Grand Canal so as to enclose that part of the canal. In the afternoon the newly arrived 2/5th and 2/6th Staffords were given the more difficult task of isolating the Four Courts area. Armoured motor-cars, to hold some 14 or 15 men, were ingeniously improvised by fitting engine boilers on to strong motor lorries. The cars advanced up the street to whichever house it had been decided to storm, for the most part corner houses, and the car was then backed up as close as possible to the front door ; when everything was ready, the storming

are going on all right ; mind no set-backs and try and do what the doctor orders.

"It is strange coming back to Dublin and living in the Royal Hospital. Since I began this letter a good deal has happened ; I think the signs are that the rebels have had enough of it. I will know this for certain to-night." (Maxwell to Lady Maxwell.)

party dashed from their vehicle with crowbars and sledgehammers, burst open the house and occupied it, while the other occupants of the car acted as a covering party to engage at once the enemy opening fire from the opposite houses. Except for the bombardment of Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the Citizen Army, guns were scarcely used, and only when sniping could not be mastered by machine-guns or rifle-fire was a round of shell called into requisition.

With the rebel areas thus surrounded and isolated, "Commandant General" Pearse, on the 29th, sent a Red Cross nurse to General Lowe asking for terms of surrender. The message was transmitted to Maxwell, who replied that the only terms which could be entertained were "unconditional surrender," although the British Government might exercise clemency to the rank and file and that the treatment of these would depend on their method of surrender.

Pearse, under cover of a white flag, repaired at once to General Lowe, who brought him to the British Commander; the interview was short and stern, the malignant seemed suddenly stunned by the thought of what he had brought upon his followers, and unhesitatingly yielded to the demand to write and sign notices ordering the various "commandos" to surrender unconditionally. The hospital nurse who had originally brought in Pearse's message, was allowed to return to his followers in Sackville Street with orders to lay down their arms near the Parnell Memorial. To quote an eye-witness, "Sackville Street presented a bizarre appearance. It was entirely deserted, with here and there a dead horse, the buildings in flames, and the only signs of life were the firemen working furiously to check the conflagration. Suddenly from out of a side-street marched the first detachment of the rebels, headed by a large white flag. Down the street they came in fours, arms carried at the slope, and marching like trained soldiers. They halted, according to instructions, one hundred yards from the troops, laid down their

In order to prevent the further slaughter of  
the unarmed people, and in the hope of saving  
the lives of our followers now surrounded and  
helplessly outnumbered, the members of the  
Provisional Government present at Headquarters  
have agreed to an unconditional surrender,  
and the commander of all units of the  
Republican forces will order their followers  
to lay down their arms.

B. H. George

29<sup>th</sup> - April 1916

4.45 p.m.

arms and stepped back on to the pavement. The arms . . . were of various kinds, but all of them very formidable weapons. Hardly had the first detachment been dealt with when a second and third marched in in similar fashion."

Five hundred rebels surrendered from the Post Office and Four Courts area that evening, and the spine of the rebellion was thus snapped. Commandant MacDonagh, after some hemming and hawing, laid down his arms on the following afternoon, the remaining commandos following suit ; Countess Markievitz, a cabotine no less than a conspirator, whose activities were odiously coloured, and whose guilt was not less than any of her colleagues, theatrically kissed her automatic pistol before handing it over.

On the evening of May 1st it could be announced in London that all the rebels in Dublin had surrendered and that the city was now quite safe. But the suppression had not been achieved without an immense destruction of property as well as a lamentable loss of life, and this is scarcely surprising when it is remembered that over 5,000 men were computed to have conspired against their Sovereign.

Maxwell's action had been swift and successful ; within 48 hours of his setting foot on Irish soil he had set a term to an Irish movement as dishonourable as it was demented, and his chief stab of pain must have been that, besides the unhappy civilian victims of treachery and violence, the casualties in the King's forces totalled 108 killed and 334 more or less seriously wounded. If satisfied with his handiwork, he was too shrewd to have any doubt but that the suppression of an outbreak must inevitably leave a smouldering fire of political recrimination and racial animosities and that much of the odium incurred would attach to himself.

The first and most distasteful duty incumbent on him was to deal with the awards of punishment to the culprits. As a soldier his hand, usually most kindly gloved, had

given some hard nips in stand-up fights with his country's enemies, but here was a matter of treating judicially men who owed the same allegiance as himself and who on their own showing were traitors no less than murderous disturbers of the peace.

It was well that his character was specially fitted for a responsibility which had to be incurred, for an ungrateful duty which, however reluctantly, had to be done.

It is within just surmise that had youthful inclination carried him towards the Bar instead of towards the barracks, Maxwell might have risen to high rank and enjoyed a large income in the legal profession. His "legal mind" was quickly recognized by any close observer of his administrative work, and that mind was for several long days, and through some rather sleepless nights, to be employed no less in determining guilt than in sifting evidence and seizing on every scrap of it which might mitigate that guilt and thus the penalty of the culprit. It is perfectly true that he insisted on the capital punishment being meted out to the ringleaders who plotted a foul crime and mercilessly put it into execution ; it is equally true that his keen judgment no less than his care for his fellow-men served to commute many sentences of death into minor penalties and accord to many prisoners the "benefit of the doubt."

By the 3rd May, P. H. Pearse, F. S. Clark, and Thomas MacDonagh, the three chief signatories of the Sinn Fein proclamation, who called upon the people of Ireland to rally to the support of the "Provisional Government of the Irish Republic," had been shot under sentence of Court Martial ; on the 4th three other rebel leaders, who were alike signatories to the ineffable proclamation, also suffered the extreme penalty of the law ; by the end of the first week in May the last executions had taken place ; a large number of death sentences had been permuted to ten years' penal servitude, 45 rebels had been awarded the same punishment for various periods and two had been ordered to undergo imprisonment with hard labour.

Mr. Asquith, on May the 9th, could stifle further comment in the House of Commons with the bald statement that in the Irish rising there had been 521 Government casualties, including 124 killed ; 17 Army officers were killed and 46 wounded ; 86 other ranks killed, 311 wounded and 9 missing ; while the other casualties were among the Dublin Metropolitan Police, the Royal Navy and the Loyal Volunteers.

The War Office called for an immediate report and in it Maxwell was careful to adduce nothing but rock facts and leave the authorities in London to draw their own deductions.

(1) The rebellion began by Sinn Feiners, presumably acting under orders, shooting in cold blood certain soldiers and policemen ; simultaneously they took possession of various important buildings and occupied houses along the routes into the City of Dublin, which were likely to be used by troops taking up posts.

(2) Most of the rebels were not in uniform, and by mixing with peaceful citizens made it almost impossible for the troops to distinguish between friend and foe until fire was opened.

(3) In many cases troops having passed along a street seemingly occupied by harmless people, were suddenly fired upon from behind from windows and roof-tops. Such were the conditions when reinforcements commenced to arrive in Dublin.

(4) No doubt in districts where the fighting was fiercest, such as in North King Street, parties of men under the great provocation of being shot at from front and rear, burst into suspected houses and killed such male members as were found ; it is perfectly possible that some innocent citizens were shot in this manner, but it must be borne in mind that they could have left their houses and passed through the cordons had they so wished.

(5) The blame for such casualties must be on the shoulders of those who engineered rebellion in the city.

(6) The number of such incidents that have been

brought to notice is happily few, less than I expected, considering the magnitude of the task.

(7) Once the rebellion started the members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police—an unarmed uniformed force—had to be withdrawn or they would have been mercilessly shot down, as indeed were all who had the bad luck to meet the rebels, consequently a number of the worst elements of the city joined the rebels and were armed by them. The daily records of the Dublin Magistrates' Court proves that such looting as there was, was done by such elements.

(8) There have been numerous incidents of deliberate shooting on ambulances and those courageous people who voluntarily came out to tend to the wounded. The City fire brigade when turned out in consequence of incendiary fires were fired on and had to retire.

(9) As soon as it was ascertained that the rebels had established themselves in various centres the first phase of operations was conducted with a view to isolate them by forming a cordon of troops round each.

(10) To carry this out streets were selected along which the cordon could be drawn. Some of these streets, for instance North King Street, were found to be strongly held, rebels occupying the roofs of houses, upper windows and strongly constructed barricades.

(11) Artillery fire was only used to reduce the barricades or against a particular house known to be strongly held.

(12) The troops suffered severe losses in establishing these cordons, and once established, the troops were subjected to a continuous fire from all directions, especially at night-time, and invariably from persons concealed in houses.

(13) To give an idea of the opposition offered to His Majesty's troops in the execution of their duty, the following losses occurred :

<i>Killed.</i>		<i>Wounded.</i>	
Officers . . . .	17	Officers . . . .	46
Other ranks . . .	89	Other ranks . . .	288



Of the large number of civilians killed and wounded it is impossible to differentiate between rebels and others.

(14) I wish to draw attention to the fact that when it became known that the leaders of the rebellion wished to surrender, the officers used every endeavour to prevent further bloodshed, emissaries were sent in to the various isolated bands and time was given them to consider their position.

(15) I cannot imagine a more difficult situation than that in which the troops were placed ; most of those employed were draft-finding battalions of young Territorials from England who had no knowledge of Dublin.

(16) The surrenders, which began on April 30th, were continued until late on May 1st, during which time there was a considerable amount of isolated sniping.

(17) Under the circumstances related above I consider the troops as a whole behaved with the greatest restraint and carried out their disagreeable and distasteful duties in a manner which reflects the greatest credit on their discipline.

(18) Allegations on the behaviour of the troops brought to my notice are being most carefully inquired into. I am glad to say they are few in number, an evidence in itself of the restraint of the troops, and these are not all borne out by direct evidence.

(19) In conclusion, I think it my duty to state that though the actual rebellion has been suppressed, there is always a danger to the safety of the Realm when so many of the Irish people, whose temperament makes them easy to lead or mislead, are in possession of firearms. The worst feature of the present situation is the fact that so few of these weapons have been surrendered, though a large number are known to be still in their possession.

(20) I wish to emphasize that the responsibility for the loss of life, however it occurred, the destruction of property and other losses, rests entirely with those who engineered this revolt and who at a time when the Empire is engaged

in a gigantic struggle invited the assistance and co-operation of the Germans.

After an announcement in the House on the 10th May that a commission of inquiry, under Lord Hardinge, had been set up, the Prime Minister was the target for a large number of questions as to the executions of the rebels and especially as to the death of a Dublin journalist, Sheehy Skeffington. Mr. Asquith explained that this unfortunate, if very indiscreet, individual had been shot without the knowledge of the Military authorities and that the officer—who eventually proved to be insane <sup>1</sup>—responsible for the shooting would be tried by court martial.

<sup>1</sup> “The Skeffington affair is very unfortunate—it occurred on the 26th April during the height of the Dublin Rebellion and whilst fighting was in progress—immediately it was heard of the officer was placed in arrest and an inquiry instituted. He went up to Belfast with his battalion under arrest.

“The officer, Colthurst, is apparently a hot-headed Irishman and on this occasion completely lost his head—I have just seen the result of the inquiry. I have ordered the officer into close arrest, and am sending up a Staff Officer to take a proper and complete summary of evidence and, when this is done, I will consult the Law Officers and try him by General Court Martial.

“There are one or two other cases which are being inquired into. In one case a sergeant acted like a madman, the redeeming feature being that he reported what he had done. It must be borne in mind in these cases that there was a lot of house-to-house fighting going on, wild rumours in circulation and owing to darkness, conflagrations, etc., apparently a good deal of ‘jumpiness.’ With young soldiers and under the circumstances I wonder there was not more. I am sending you to-day a précis of the antecedents of all the executed rebels. I do not consider that in any of these cases there were any extenuating circumstances. I weighed everything before I confirmed the courts.

“The most bitter critics appear to be the extreme Nationalists, between some of these and Sinn Feiners it is well nigh impossible to distinguish.

“I have been careful in any orders I have issued to impress on all concerned, particularly mobile column commanders, that we are dealing with Sinn Feiners and Citizen Army only and that only the dangerous ones known to the police should be arrested. These columns are working in with R.I.C. and are disarming these late forces.” (Maxwell to Kitchener.)

Mr. Dillon, however, having secured the adjournment of the House, declared on the following day that the Prime Minister himself was being kept in the dark as to secret shootings in Ireland ; he pronounced himself proud of the rebels and pleasantly suggested that the soldiers were washing out the life-work of the Nationalists in a sea of blood.

The Prime Minister stoutly defended Sir John Maxwell and the troops under his command, reminded the House that only 13 rebels had been executed and that, apart from one case of actual murder, it was only the leaders of the rising who had undergone the death penalty.

Having delivered his oration, the Prime Minister left that evening for Dublin to draw on the spot his own conclusions, which he kept to himself until in the House, on the 25th, he spoke of the complete breakdown of the machinery of Irish Government, and added, with perhaps unjustifiable optimism, that given a combined effort to obtain an agreement as to how that Government should be carried on, it was inconceivable that after the War, with its joint sacrifices from Englishmen and Irishmen, there should be domestic strife in Ireland.

During his stay<sup>1</sup> at the Viceregal Lodge, Asquith set himself to confer closely with Maxwell on every point affecting Irish circumstances in *esse* and *posse*, and the Soldier was led to think that the Statesman both approved all that he had hitherto done and reposed entire confidence in him for future dealings ; anyhow, he was begged to write freely and directly to Downing Street, and was assured that the Cabinet would solidly support him.

On the morrow of his explanation in the House the

<sup>1</sup> Sir John availed himself of the P.M.'s visit to arrange a big parade of various Officers and Volunteer Training Corps in Trinity College, when tributes were paid alike by the Statesman and the Soldier to the prompt help given by the O.T.C. and to others who, corporately and individually, had rendered help when help was sorely needed. This was the first of a series of functions to which, however official in character, it was sought to give the largest possible social flavour.

Minister was to hear from Maxwell : " I am glad to read that an attempt will be made to bring all parties together and settle the Irish question as far as it is possible to settle it by consent.

" It seems the only way now.

" The process of combing out those who have been arrested is proceeding as fast as possible ; each deported person who remains in custody will have a complete dossier which will be available to the Commission that will finally judge each case. Naturally we have had to depend largely on police reports.

" The ladies whom I intended to send to England under the Defence of the Realm Act, Regulation 14, will now be kept here in custody, but unless we formulate charges and try them I do not clearly see how we can indefinitely detain them. The above-quoted Regulation appeared to be the easiest way out of a difficulty, and these ladies had elected to reside at Oxford.

" In regard to the Bowen Colthurst case, I have to-day issued a communiqué to the Press that the Court Martial will be held at Richmond Barracks on June 6th, 1916. Lord Cheylesmore will be President. Mr. James Chambers, K.C., is Counsel for Colthurst, and Major Kimber, D.S.O., a barrister of experience, is prosecuting.

" No new evidence has come to light.

" Two other cases will be tried by the same Court, but these are not the North King Street cases. As to the latter, I am sending the proceedings of each Court of Inquiry, with my remarks thereon, to the Secretary of State for War ; he will no doubt show them to you. Although given every facility, those who make affidavits fail to identify either officers or soldiers. I must emphasize that the character of the house-to-house fighting and the desperate resistance of some of the rebels, sniping as they did from windows, house-tops, etc., killing His Majesty's troops engaged in restoring law and order, made it necessary for the latter to shoot at sight men found in houses from which snipers were thought to have fired. If men

therefore were killed who were innocent, the blame rests with those who brought the rebellion into being.

"I understand that bodies of some of those killed were, for sanitary reasons, temporarily buried wherever possible ; it must be remembered that from the 24th to the 29th, in the areas where the rebels held out, it was impossible to move either ambulances or stretcher-bearers without grave risk. This probably accounts for the burials, though I can get no evidence in the specific cases that this was actually done by soldiers.

"Great capital is being made out of these (North King Street), but the cold-blooded shooting of soldiers, police and civilians by rebels is passed over in silence.

"I am sending forward a list of those that are known or reported, but it is incomplete.

"The columns sent out to gather in arms and arrest prominent Sinn Feiners are now all in. I fear the total arms given up or seized is not large, and I regard this as an unsatisfactory feature and in my opinion is largely due to the action of Irish M.P.'s, in voicing the protests against the action of the Military Authorities, also to the fear that we would disarm the National Volunteers.

"For the Colthurst case the court will be open, but admittance by ticket ; accommodation is necessarily limited.

"I have just got McNeill's Court Martial ; he was found guilty of all the charges—it is very interesting reading—I think we ought to make a great deal of it public, but when I have confirmed the sentence I will send the proceedings to the Judge Advocate General, and it can be decided in London how much should be made public, if any. Lord Hardinge's commission ought to see it.

"It shows pretty plainly that if Casement's adventure had not misfired we would have been up against a much more serious affair.

"I am doing all I can to correct the impression, that seems current in America, that we caused the rebellion to start by repressive measures, and that it began by the cold-

blooded murder of Dublin police constables on duty in Dublin City. I sent Lord K. a short report on the character of the fighting, which I hope is what was wanted.

"I send with this some interesting extracts from the Rules of the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Volunteer Oath, also that of the Irish Rebellion Brotherhood."

And a few days later : "I sent you some time ago copies of correspondence with the Most Reverend Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick.

"He is the only dignitary of the R.C. Church who has taken up this attitude.

"He sent the correspondence to the *Cork Examiner* (who published it) without asking my consent.

"I am afraid this action has done some harm and incited others to defy authority.

"I am getting reports now from the R.I.C. that Priests are offering Masses for the repose of the souls of those who have died, or been executed, [*sic*] martyrs to their country's cause, etc.

"It is an exceedingly difficult matter to deal with this question, and I think if His Holiness the Pope could be induced to advise the Cardinal Archbishop and Bishops in Ireland to prevent Priests from mixing themselves up with matters political, seditious or unconnected with their spiritual position, some good might come of it.

"In regard to the Ladies we have under arrest here, I enclose for your information some letters on the subject. Doctor Kathleen Lynn's father is evidently anxious to get his daughter out of her present associates.

"The letter from Miss Maloney gives a good idea of the part some of these ladies took in the rebellion and the steps that are being taken to agitate for the release of those we have for internment.

"I do not like the temper of the people, all reports tend to show that a general rising could easily occur if any outside support is forthcoming."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### DEATH OF KITCHENER

THE demeanour of the disaffected priests was a source of peculiar trouble and their sense of patriotism was—to say the least of it—very unhappily expressed. If at no time a practising Churchman, Maxwell was like most soldiers imbued with a deep sense of reverence for things sacred, and to be in conflict with the Ministers of Holy Church was to him abhorrent. But such conflict was forced on him by the Bishop of Limerick, who, moreover, thought well to publish an exchange of letters in the Press without reference to his correspondent. Maxwell's letter (May 6th, 1916) was on simple lines :

“ I have the honour to request your Lordship's co-operation in a matter connected with the present deplorable situation in Ireland, the settlement of which I am confident you desire no less keenly than I do. There are two priests in your diocese, —, the Rev. Father —, of —, County Limerick, and the Rev. Father —, of —, County Limerick, whose presence in that neighbourhood I consider to be a dangerous menace to the peace and safety of the Realm, and, had these priests been laymen, they would have already been placed under arrest. In this case I would be glad if your Lordship could obviate the necessity for such action by moving these priests to such employment as will deny them having intercourse with the people, and inform me of your decision.”

When a high ecclesiastic, however profound a theologian, intrudes into politics, the result is apt to be nearly as unfor-

tunate as when a politician, however astute in his own arena, strays into strategy.

The prelate thought fit to reply through a secretary asking the grounds on which the continuance of the priests in their existing duties could be thought a menace to peace.

Maxwell notified the Bishop that one priest was reported as having attended a revolutionary lecture by Pearse, of blessing the colours of the Irish Volunteers and of speaking at a meeting which was inspired by very questionable loyalty. The other reverend gentleman had been instrumental in having printed a sheaf of leaflets appealing to young men of the Gaelic Athletic Association to join the Irish Volunteers, and to have attended on St. Patrick's Day a meeting when one MacDermot delivered a highly inflammatory and distinctly seditious speech. The Bishop's retort—reply is scarcely the word—postulated that Maxwell was asking him to further the work of a Military Dictation whose proceedings had been wantonly cruel and oppressive ; he alluded to the “ poor young fellows who had surrendered and had been shot in cold blood ” and wound up his allocution with “ your régime has been one of the worst and blackest chapters in the history of the misgovernment of this country.” Nor was Mr. Dillon to escape the Bishop's lash. “ I thought,” he said of that politician, “ at one time that he was an Irishman. I have learnt since then that he is not even a man. He is a mere figurehead painted green ; the War has shown us what he is made of, and the partition of Ireland, which he attempted to smuggle through, is the best indication of his ability and his patriotism.”

For many weeks Sir John was bound to be under a cyclone of letters, some congratulatory, some damning with faint praise, many couched in terms of obloquy and abuse. To all which bore the mark of some knowledge of the subject he gave careful attention ; to many he replied in his own hand. To Lord Monteagle, perhaps one of the best types of resident landlord, who wrote to him in mid-May, gracefully suggesting that, while an appeal to the



King might weaken military authority, it would allay some of the class bitterness "which the insurrection has inevitably aroused," if the G.O.C. would personally receive a petition for leniency to the rank and file. The reply ran :

"I have not the smallest objection to accepting the petition for clemency. I do not think that this is the moment to appeal to His Majesty. No one but myself has the evidence against the convicted. All will admit that open rebellion occurred at a time when the Empire is engaged in a desperate war involving the safety of the Realm. In my opinion, however much the rank and file were 'deeped' or talked over, we must take the facts into consideration, and supposing that the bulk of them believed that they were called out for manœuvres only, does that exonerate them for keeping out when they saw what was? I think not. I think you will find that the attitude of authority will be one of leniency, that is to say, when the time comes for the Crown to exercise its prerogative of leniency; but when Dublin is still smouldering and the blood of the victims of this mad rebellion is hardly dry, is it the moment for clemency to win the rank and file?

"I may say that all cases are being most carefully inquired into, an inquiry that bristles with difficulties, but all are given the benefit of any doubts there may be.

"All cases of wrong deportation will, if proved, be righted as soon as possible. I think also you will observe from the sentences of those convicted that great consideration is shown, but there are degrees of guilt which can only be judged by evidence."

Alike in his reports and in his private correspondence Maxwell's fair-mindedness, and firm grasp of the situation, were apparent. He sharply condemned the policy of drift and oscillations between "conciliation" and "coercion"; he thought—and said—that the Ulster Volunteers had scarcely encouraged a spirit of law and order, and that Irish Nationalist Volunteers had been formed as a reply to them; he was scarcely less distressed than disgusted by

the poverty and squalor—both largely preventable—which prevailed in some sections of Dublin ; he laid a heavy finger on absentee landlordism in other parts of the country, as playing its part in fostering disaffection and discontent : he urged that a strong executive need be no synonym for anything like blind repression—and above all he was sure that there was a crying need for an executive not only firm and impartial but inspired by sufficient sympathy to meet warm-hearted folk half-way in redressing legitimate grievances and not to wait until an outbreak rendered some redress for alleged grievances a subject for debate ; to do this was merely to promote the doctrine of “Revolt pays.” Such views clearly defined and expressed were sure, at a time of mutual distrust, to displease extremists of both parties. The attitude of a certain group of Irish Nationalists towards Sinn Fein was a little undetermined if not actually open to doubt. There were Irish politicians at Westminster who, without “going the whole hog” in supporting armed rebellion, were secretly fearful of the growing popularity of that section of Irish opinion which bluntly proclaimed political action as in any case useless ; they saw themselves left in the cold whilst a new party fought by other means for the cause they had at heart, and sought to gain the ear of young Nationalist Ireland. And while voices were shrill in heated, if rather uninformed, discussion, it was a cheap cry to bring wholesale charges of murder, arson and other misdeeds against British troops ; a denunciation of “Martial Law”<sup>1</sup> was sure to rouse an echo in turbulent Irish breasts and to be applauded in certain English political circles. In any repression of armed revolt, soldiers fighting for their own lives against men in mufti must be hard put to it in moments of stress to distinguish innocent bystanders from rebels who have thrown away arms when those arms have already done their bloody

<sup>1</sup> As early as possible Maxwell modified the restrictions of Martial Law so that all people could move about freely except between midnight and 4 a.m.

work, nor could "Courts of Inquiry," however carefully set up, find it easy amid a clamour of tongue to draw the fine line between "fervent Nationalist sympathies" and "support of Sinn Fein." Thus with a powerful party inclining to a policy akin to "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds" and with a powerful Press not indisposed to distort and magnify any incident which could reflect upon the Military and the Government, Maxwell's position was beset with difficulties which he neither exaggerated nor minimized, but simply sought to overcome.

The first shock of the Rebellion of course stifled criticism or adverse comment ; the danger was too manifest for mincing measures to cope with it. But once fighting had died down and the victims had been laid to rest there was a movement to martyrize if not canonize the rebels who had suffered and to load abuse on those who had restored the King's peace.

The censored letters of prisoners marked the barometer ; at first they wrote in a dejected spirit ; as if fully conscious of their own shame and the misery of others. Then there filtered through to them the speeches in Parliament, articles in the Irish Press and in sympathetic English journals which went to persuade them that their deeds smacked of heroism ; the tone and text of the communications of these bravoos then had a defiant note, and as some of them were released and received by processions and festivities on returning home, any feeling of regret seemed to disappear altogether.<sup>1</sup> The ground was thus being prepared for later strife and terrorism.

In mid-June Maxwell told the Prime Minister roundly that the two prominent and malignant factors in the exist-

<sup>1</sup> "The correspondence of the interned prisoners shows a decided turn for the worse, for whereas on the first blush of captivity their letters were more or less apologetic and humble, now the tone is defiant and shows that they are not in the least repentant. In fact they think they were very gallant fellows." (Maxwell to Asquith.)

ing situation were Mr. Dillon's speech in the House of Commons and the Skeffington case, and that both had been skilfully used to embitter public opinion against the Government and more especially against the action of the Military ; he was sure that the demand for public inquiries into the deaths which occurred in the Rebellion was only raised in order to discredit the soldiers and to put the blame for the outbreak at the door of the Authorities.

In a long letter he urged the Prime Minister to bear in mind what preceded the rebellion :

“ From one reason or another, things had been allowed to drift, and what is now known as Sinn Feinism came into being. They appear to have been led by Mr. John McNeill and an inner circle. A ‘ split ’ from the Constitutional—1914—party occurred some months before the actual rebellion took place ; they then merged with the extremist labour party originated by Larkin, and latterly directed by J. Connolly. These started the Citizen Army, which, though not identical with the Irish Volunteers (McNeill's Army), armed and prepared for war (or rebellion), as did the Irish Volunteers.

“ The Redmondite Volunteers also had been armed and equipped, drilled, etc., as a counterpoise to the Ulster Volunteers, who likewise were armed and equipped to oppose Home Rule. McNeill and his party, Connolly and the Citizen Army, seem to have been financed and run by the German-American-Clan-na G  l organization from America. This led to the Casement enterprise and the Rebellion. There can be little doubt that had there been more capable leaders, and had the promise of assistance from Germany been fulfilled, the insurrection would have been very much more formidable, and on a larger scale. As things turned out it missed fire, and McNeill realized too late that he was in an impossible situation, and though he tried he could not altogether stop what had been engineered for Easter. Hence the rebellion was more or less confined to certain areas, Dublin the principal one, because Connolly, Pearse, and others of the inner circle

were more determined than McNeill. These forced the situation. The results are known.

“It is impossible to conceive a more inflammable or dangerous condition than Ireland had been allowed to drift into. On the one hand, there were the Ulster Volunteers, who were permitted to come into existence, arm, organize, drill, train, etc., though an unrepealed Act of Parliament was on the Statute Book : ‘Volunteers in Ireland will not be allowed,’ or words to that effect. From this date the troubles. The law was broken, and others broke the law with more or less success. As the Arms Act had been repealed, the police were helpless, and soon lost all track of the arms in the country. This is the position to-day.

“What have we to face? The Rebellion has taken place and been suppressed : I cannot say more than that. The leaders have been removed, but the conditions that led up to the Rebellion remain.

“The first results of the punishments inflicted were good. The majority of the people recognized that these were not excessive and were just.

“From one cause or another a revulsion of feeling set in—one of sympathy for the rebels. Irish M.P.’s, the Press, priests and public bodies have, by their actions, increased this feeling, with the result that the executed leaders have become martyrs and the rank and file ‘patriots.’ There is little sympathy for the civilians, police, or soldiers who were murdered or killed in the Rebellion.

“There has been a great deal of misrepresentation. It has been stated that the leaders were murdered or executed in cold blood without trial ; that people have been deported who took no part in the Rebellion without trials or charges preferred against them. That the Military have been harsh, unjust and oppressive, etc., trials in camera, Mr. Dillon’s speech in the House of Commons, did enormous mischief ; his statements were not refuted : the questions asked and answered in the House of Commons,

reported in extension in all Irish newspapers, have tended to convince the people that the Sinn Feiners have the Irish more than all the rest."

In the thick of his present troubles and anxieties, a man whose heart was no less tender than it was brave must have staggered for a moment under the swift and sudden blow which the tragedy of the *Hampshire* struck him, and for a while his letters were eloquent with his grief. And he was distressed in his soul by the secrecy which it was sought to maintain as to how and why the unhappy event had happened. He would say in after-years how sadly sure he was from the first that some neglect or carelessness must be attributed to those who had in charge so precious a life ; he was not to learn for many a day that an unswept channel had been chosen for the passage of the *Hampshire*, and that the all-important report as to the direction of the wind, which was supposed to govern the decision of those responsible, was erroneous. He stoutly refused to accept the story that Lord Kitchener had imposed his will in any way on the naval authorities ; no man, he would say, so strict in his sense of discipline and correctitude, would have sought to over-ride expert advice on a point as to which he was not qualified to give an opinion. Kitchener had been for him not only a well-loved Chief, but a staunch and unswerving friend. From the first the disciple had accepted the standard of the master. He knew that full service would be exacted of him and that his service would for the most part receive little other than silent approval from a soldier who was never fluent in praise. But he knew perfectly well that bound up with this restraint there was a subtle kind of flattery, preferable in the eyes of Kitchener's immediate entourage, to the spoken congratulations of other leaders. Subordinates who were dear to him always understood that Kitchener lodged utter trust in them and was sure that he would receive illimitable loyalty in return. Maxwell was one of the little group to whom Kitchener would

speaking of the things near his heart, and under the thinnest crust of sternness no kindlier heart ever lodged in human frame.

To Maxwell as to Kitchener, Egypt was a sort of spiritual home, where they delighted to live and where both would have been well content to die. For both, Egypt was an open book of unending interest ; both men regarded—though to the younger was most unhappily denied—the Agency in Cairo as the most precious prize in the race of life ; and it may be fairly said that to these two Egypt and Egyptians gave a measure of confidence and genuine affection withheld from any other who sought—however wisely and faithfully—to serve Egyptian interests.

On the 3rd July the Royal Commission published its report, in the course of which the growth of the Irish Volunteers was traced from the Army of Industrial Strikers in Dublin in the winter of 1913. There was no attempt to mask the fact that confidential reports by the heads of the R.I.C. and the D.M.P. had supplied the Irish Government, even before the outbreak of the War, information as to the general state of affairs and particularly as to the activities of a disloyal body of armed men who constituted a constantly increasing menace to peace in Ireland.

The Lord Lieutenant was acquitted of responsibility and the Chief Secretary was sharply blamed for having allowed lawlessness to grow up unchecked.

“Ireland for several years past has been administered on the principle that it is safer and more expedient to leave law in abeyance if collision with any fraction of the Irish people could thereby be avoided.”

The more normal the aspect of affairs became, the greater the tendency to credit the General Officer Commanding the Troops with authority he did not enjoy, and at the same time to accuse him rather illogically of exercising too largely his military powers.

Maxwell was responsible for the preservation of order, but despite his mandate he had no authority to over-ride

the will of the Civil Powers and could only set his soldiers in motion if expressly invited to do so. Even after receipt of an alarming report, coupled with an appeal for help, of cattle-driving on a large scale about to take place in Roscommon, he would only send a battalion with the authority of the 1st Secretary and a written request from the Inspector-General of the Constabulary.<sup>1</sup>

Just when it was most needed there was no central co-ordinating authority present on the spot to combine all administrative organs, police, magistrates, civil functionaries, etc., into a concerted scheme of government with the military to lend the final, completing element of overwhelming force. The viceregal authority, after a somewhat halting mechanism, was now entirely dislocated, and Maxwell had no right, or wish, to push himself into the vacant seat of office. The Crimes Act, the Arms Act, D.O.R.A., all were legal instruments which primarily demanded enforcement by a legal executive, and with things fairly normal, the Law Courts and Courts of Summary Jurisdiction could exercise their functions without military interference, the Law officers advising that no action of any sort under Martial Law should occur—advice with which Maxwell was wholly willing to agree. All he asked was that his status should be defined and, whatever its scope, officially recognized.

“An idea is prevalent,” he told the Prime Minister on the 17th July, “that I have been entrusted with greater powers than is the case. I brought this to notice in my report to you in June last. But I am now of the opinion

<sup>1</sup> “To-day a telegram has come in with news of a contemplated cattle drive on a large scale at Ballinasloe in Co. Roscommon and they have given out that they mean to do for the police. Four thousand men armed with sticks, etc., are reported to intend to take part. I am asked by the R.I.C. to send troops to assist police. I have consulted Sir R. Chambers and he considers that this sort of thing must be stopped. I am sending a battalion there from the 59th Division.

“I have given orders to the C.O. that he is not to fire unless it is absolutely necessary for the safety of the troops and Police.” (Maxwell to G.O.C. Home Troops.)



that it is essential, if I am to remain on in Ireland for any useful purpose, that my position must be regularized.

“My duties have been arduous, difficult and responsible, and whilst I have not the least desire to shirk or abandon them, experience has convinced me that if I am to remain I must do so in some defined position.

“As you are aware, I left England with plenary powers from you to deal with the rebellion which unhappily existed ; a result was that the situation became altered by the resignation of the Irish Executive ; since then, with the exception of an Under-Secretary, no appointment has been made. The police are not under the G.O.C.-in-C. in Ireland, nor is there any obligation for them to report to him, except through the Under-Secretary.

“I do not of course know the intentions of the Government in regard to Ireland, but I presume that, for the duration of the War at any rate, the police will remain under the Imperial Government, but if the G.O.C.-in-C. is held responsible for the maintenance of law and order his position, powers and responsibilities should be defined.

“There is a widespread opinion in and out of Parliament that I am virtually Military Governor of Ireland and responsible for the control of every branch of administration, civil and military ; as this is not the case and nothing has been published in any *Gazette* or official document giving me any status outside my military command, or right to interfere in civil matters, and as the R.I.C. and police are not officially under my control, if I am in any way to be held responsible for any occurrence in Ireland, I submit it is essential to define my responsibilities and powers.

“And if in the light of recent events my personality or action in connection therewith is likely to jeopardize or interfere with the amicable settlement of Irish affairs, I place my resignation unreservedly in your hands.”

But so far, even if Death had robbed him of his unfailing champion, Sir John was not without his thick and thin supporters in the Cabinet.

"We hear all sorts of reports," wrote Mr. Long<sup>1</sup> just then, "about the condition of Ireland. We are also told that you are seriously interfered with in your administration of the country by the Government here. We, the ordinary members of the Government, have no knowledge as to these allegations—their truth or the reverse—and it is undoubtedly the fact that we are distressed at the absence of reliable information and reports.

"I understood you to tell me when you were here last that there is no foundation for the suggestion that you are interfered with, but that you had felt that your position requires regularizing—in other words, that you should be made in name what you are in fact, the actual Governor of Ireland, military and civil, with complete control over every branch of Irish Administration.

"I may say here that I am writing not for myself alone, but after full consultation with Lord Lansdowne, and with his concurrence and by his desire : he and I have remained in the Cabinet not only because we believe that at this moment resignations will be wrong, but also because we think that we can assist in securing good government in Ireland.

"We of course do not want to be thought to be usurping the functions of others. At the same time we feel very strongly that as regards detailed information about the condition of Ireland or the position of the Government there, we really know no more than we did when Birrell was Chief-Secretary, and the responsibility for this does not rest with us, for as you know I have written to you more than once in the same sense."

"You seem to have a wrong conception," Maxwell promptly replied, "of my power in existing Irish affairs.

"I was sent to Ireland with plenary powers verbally given to deal with a state of rebellion that unhappily existed.

"The Lord Lieutenant, Chief- and Under-Secretaries

<sup>1</sup> The Right Honble. Walter Long, President of the Local Government Board, later Lord Long.

all resigned office and Sir R. Chalmers<sup>1</sup> was appointed Under-Secretary vice Sir. M. Nathan.

"In the absence of both Lord Lieutenant and Chief-Secretary, the office of the former is vested in a Commission of the Lords Justices, P.C.'s of Ireland, and the Home Secretary becomes automatically responsible to Government for Irish affairs. Thus the Under-Secretary becomes the only statutory executive officer residing in Ireland. All Government Departments report through him and he to the Home Secretary.

"I, as G.O.C.-in-C., Ireland, have not by any instrument been given functions or authority over the machinery of civil government in Ireland.

"Martial Law has been proclaimed over the whole of Ireland, but as there is no longer a state of active rebellion, or armed resistance to authority, and as the Law Courts and Courts of summary Jurisdiction are exercising their functions, the Irish Law Officers of the Crown are of the opinion that with the ordinary law and the defence of the

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*5th September, 1916.*

MY DEAR SIR JOHN MAXWELL,

In reply to your letter of the 2nd instant, I am at one with you in holding that the Chief-Secretary is the proper channel by which all of us should approach His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant on Irish affairs. (Any other course is contrary to the sound principle of the "chain of command.") Further, it is for the Chief-Secretary to say when and how he need trouble His Excellency with the several matters which come under the notice of the Chief-Secretary.

Accordingly, I am in agreement with you that you should address the Chief-Secretary in regard to any communications which you may from time to time have to make as G.O.C.-in-C., in regard also to any advice—legal or other—which you may seek from the Irish Executive.

My view, as above, is free from all doubts and I add the hope that you will proceed accordingly.

As I am going on leave this evening, I should like to thank you with all my heart for the more than cordial relations on which we have worked together on the business of Ireland for the last four months.

With the best of good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT CHALMERS.

Realm Act and regulations in force, there is no present justification for the exercise of any special power under Martial Law.

“ Except for political unrest the country is quiet, there is no abnormal crime, there is a bad sulky feeling, opposition to recruiting and sedition broadcast, but beyond a few cases of cattle-driving in Roscommon and King's County which are being effectively dealt with by the police, there is nothing unusual occurring.

“ The Military are here to assist the police and will do so whenever called on. As a matter of fact, they have been called on, and a battalion sent to Ballinasloe, where it now is, to help the police and prevent any bloodshed, if possible, in the stoppage of the cattle-driving.

“ The R.I.C. and the police are not directly under my orders, they take their instructions from and report to the Under-Secretary ; it was for this reason that in my report in June last (which was circulated to the Cabinet) I said, ‘ That my position should be defined as there was a general impression that I had been vested with powers that I do not possess.’ I understand that this particular question was discussed in the Cabinet, but so far I have received no authority or power other than the verbal instructions originally given me.

“ I fully expected the Prime Minister would make some reference to my powers in the statement he made in the House, but he did not do so. Apparently you and other Cabinet Ministers think that I have some definite powers !

“ The situation in Ireland has not changed in any essential and nothing has occurred to warrant military interference. It is, however, impossible to predict what will happen, but I do not apprehend any further act of rebellion.

“ Some expect the bulk of the Nationalists to secede and merge into the Sinn Fein party, but for the moment the latter have no recognized or trusted leader. Opinions fluctuate ; one day the Redmondites seem in the ascendant, the next day less so.

"At one time I thought Redmond was decidedly on the up grade, but now I doubt it ; if there was any honest official test, he and his party might be surprised.

"There are very many 'on the Fence' and anything might occur to make them throw in their lot with the Sinn Feiners.

"I have all along contended that with the force at my disposal and with the available police forces, there is no difficulty in maintaining order and enforcing the law. I, of course, assume that no matter the form of Government, these forces remain directly under the British Government and are controlled in Ireland by the G.O.C.-in-C., and it is chiefly in this respect that my position should be regularized by some instrument, so that all and sundry recognize that authority. At present it is a mere matter of courtesy that I see the police reports or am told what they are doing ; normally they report to the Under-Secretary.

"I am not Military Governor of Ireland, though some seem to think I am, so I have no right or authority to interfere with the machinery of civil government in Ireland."

One more penalty had to be paid, and to be paid in bitter earnest. At the end of June, after a four days' trial, Sir Roger Casement was sentenced to be hanged for high treason, and on August 3rd the execution took place. Maxwell always congratulated himself that with this most unhappy and unsavoury story he had no direct concern, except so far as it bore on German complicity in the Irish plot. As regards that complicity the question will lie whether it were a legitimate act of war on Germany's part to foster rebellion in Ireland and enlist the services of any disaffected Irishman who could be duped or drummed into sedition. Germany was not out to risk very much, except a tolerably large sum of money, in the Irish adventure, and was perhaps fairly well satisfied with the flutter she caused in the United Kingdom ; her part in the occasion will be chiefly remembered for her cynical indifference as to the fate of her

Irish victims. That they put their necks in peril of the gallows or gave their bodies as a prey to bullets did not trouble her ; Ireland and Irish liberties only touched her at the point where she thought she might strike an ugly blow at Great Britain.

For the remainder of the Session of Parliament, the Irish " situation " was a theme for discussion and Maxwell was to be the constant shuttlecock between the battledores of Mr. Asquith and Mr. Redmond, the latter gentleman eventually declaring—in the debate on the plans of the Government for the conduct of Irish affairs during the War—that the system of military rule had done more to spread disaffection in Ireland than all the organizers of Sinn Fein. The Prime Minister's reply to this preposterous announcement was somewhat mild, so much so as to suggest to keen listeners that Maxwell's administration was not to be enduring. Martial Law, Mr. Asquith said, had been proclaimed as a precautionary measure rather than enforced in practice ; he feared that the Military forces in Ireland could not be substantially reduced, and while paying a further tribute to Sir John's work he understood the necessity of a civil executive responsible to Parliament.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### IRELAND

THE Duke of Wellington would write a memorandum of sixteen pages and copy it with his own hand ; Lord Curzon's prodigious output with a quill pen is proverbial. Whether or no Maxwell thought to clarify his thoughts by putting them on paper, the reams of stationery traversed by his own pen in the last two decades of his life give proof of an industry in some measure self-enforced, for in childhood and youth indolence had been something of a besetting fault.

After three months' interval he was not wholly divorced from the cares of his late command ; requests rained on to him to add to the recommendations embodied in his despatch and letters of poignant regret as to his departure from Egypt were perpetually placed in his hands. To missives of this sort, no less than to letters of congratulation and condolence from friends in various walks of life, a prompt answer, generally in his own handwriting, would be returned and any point adduced would be tactfully dealt with.

And harassed as he was by his immediate responsibilities and anxious as he was at the time as regards the precarious state of his wife's health, nothing could for long detach his attention from the Near East. With Kitchenier dead and Birdwood translated to an Army command in France, Wingate became Maxwell's chief source of information for all that affected Egypt and the Sudan, and with Wingate there was to be until the end of the War a lengthy continuous exchange of letters.

ERKOWIT.

"Many thanks," the Sirdar wrote from Erkowit on the 23rd August, "for your very interesting letter of July 31st—it has helped me more than any number of newspaper articles to understand the extraordinary situation in Ireland and the general chaos and muddle which appears to reign there. I suppose that if, when Carson and Redmond were ready to shake hands, the supporters of both sides had loyally co-operated in clinching the matter, all might have been well; but in allowing things to drift everything will get out of hand and it looks like going back to the *status quo ante*. I am thankful that you are at the military helm and I am delighted to see the general confidence expressed all round in your management of a most difficult situation, but I wish they would let you exercise Martial Law a little more freely.

"As you know, the revolt of the Sherif of Mecca has been simmering for a long time past, and I am inclined to think that political action, as directed from the Residency, rather tended to precipitate matters before everything was quite ready: however, be that as it may, there is no doubt the Sherif could not have delayed much longer.<sup>1</sup> His army is practically a rabble and run on Dervish lines; the British Government has supplied him with rifles, ammunition, money and other sinews of war, but the religious question is a serious bar to giving more help in the way of an expeditionary force, as the Hejaz Arabs are, as you know, peculiarly averse to anything like Christian interference in the proximity to the Holy Places of Islam. The Sherif was, I believe, given to understand that the Hejaz Railway would be cut somewhere in the north, but so far it has been impossible for Murray to do anything in this direction as his already reduced forces have been fully employed in repelling the Turkish attack in the Katia neighbourhood.

<sup>1</sup> The Arab revolt was largely engineered from the Sudan by the writer in conjunction with the local religious authorities.



“Knowing the Sherif’s need of guns, I hurried off a 6-gun battery of 2.95 Q.F. guns and a 6-gun galloping Maxim battery, and with the assistance of these he was enabled to gain undisputed possession of Mecca and hopes shortly to capture the Taif garrison. The battery I sent was the one that did such good service for you at Tussum, and it is keeping up its reputation. The Sultan is very anxious that the participation of the Egyptian Army to this small extent should not be known, so I must ask you to keep this information confidential. I wish I could assist more, but with Darfur on my hands I cannot spare another gun, animal or man—indeed, I am applying for funds for a much-needed increase of E.A. Troops to cope with my ever-growing responsibilities.

“I am inclined to think that the Turkish attack towards the Canal was designed by the German General Staff to cover the despatch of reinforcements to Medina, where there is a large Turkish force well supplied with guns and ammunition—Medina itself is lightly invested by some thousands of Arab scallywags, but they have no guns, though they are well found with rifles. It seems to me not at all impossible that unless Murray can throw a force astride the Hejaz Railway, and thus cut off all connection, the Turks have every chance of re-capturing the Holy Places of Islam and thus breaking down the Sherif’s movement— If this happens it will be most unfortunate and would, I think, do more damage to our prestige in the Moslem world than even the Dardanelles failure or the surrender at Kut.

“I am afraid that India has absorbed a great deal of the Turco-German propaganda, and by treating the Sherif’s movements lukewarmly, has rather put off the Home Government, with the result that beyond giving him assistance with the sinews of war, they are not showing any great keenness to isolate the Turks in Arabia, and thus give the Sherif time to get his house in order.

“M’Mahon, in conjunction with the Indian Govern-

ment, is generally controlling matters, and at his request I lent him Wilson, from Port Sudan, as British Representative at Jeddah, with whose assistance I hope they will succeed in making satisfactory arrangements for the partial pilgrimage to Mecca and Arafat, but of course Medina is out of the question."

Through Birdwood,<sup>1</sup> Sir John was kept closely informed of doings in France, and of the "Anzacs" in particular, and the correspondence between two soldiers of the same school never flagged through the years to come.

"We shall be starting our big fighting here," Birdwood wrote on the 21st July, "in a few hours now—in fact, before this leaves me—so I can mention that we will be attacking one of the strongest points on the German front by night, and I hope will meet with success. They have, of course, lots of wire out which we hope to cut, and worse luck to it, they have these tremendously strong cellars, which any amount of big guns seems unable to knock down—however, we shall hope to do our best to knock them out with, I trust, the minimum losses to ourselves.

"I am sorry to say I have just heard from Godley, who has the 5th Australian Division with his corps, that they have just had heavy casualties in an attack they made in the part of the world we have recently left, and though they apparently did very well, I cannot yet gather that the advantages were quite commensurate. However, the only way we are going to win this war is by keeping on constantly killing Germans, and I trust this is going on satisfactorily—but the end is a long way off yet, for positions are strong, and the Germans are stubborn fighters.

"I forget if I told you in one of my last letters a thing that rather amused me. I told my boys that when they went raiding, they were always to try and bring back three prisoners. The first day one man paraded with four

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Birdwood, later C.-in-C. in India, commanded firstly the 1st Anzac Corps and in 1918 the 5th Army in France.

of them, and apologizing to the first officer he met, asked if he should not shoot the fourth, and when told 'Certainly not,' gave him a cigarette instead !"

In mid-October the Royal Commission, under Sir John Simon, issued its report on the circumstances connected with the shooting of Mr. Sheehy Skeffington, and with the issue of this report the unfortunate incident closed. But the disagreeable impression created was to endure, and the fact that Captain Bowen Colthurst was not responsible for his actions was insufficient to prevent Martial Law being again stigmatized, or the untoward event being made a peg on which to hang further "got up" but virulent abuse of the General Officer responsible for its observance.

Mr. Redmond was again on the war-path and brandishing a long list of the grievances from which the Irish were suffering, but his grave charge was that Ministers were maintaining a system of government in Ireland inconsistent with the principles for which we had waged a European war ; to him the saddest circumstance was that the Irish regiments at the Front might be unable to find themselves in full strength.<sup>1</sup> Did the fiery zealot know that this consideration was, no less than his own, the consuming thought of the men against whom he was so bitterly pitting himself? Underlying all Maxwell's plans and procedure was the burning desire to send his trained men—as many, and as soon, as possible—to take their rightful place in the line against their country's hulking enemy, and—so far as his powers of persuasion enabled him—to induce others to join the Colours for the same purpose.

In Parliament the problem of recruiting in Ireland was dealt with by Mr. Lloyd George, who remembered that

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Devlin, it may be remembered, went a little further and in a sudden spasm of sympathy for the men in the trenches, accused the Government of employing soldiers who should be fighting against Germany to fight for the rule of Sir John Maxwell.

since August, 1914, only two and a half per cent. of the Irish population had taken up arms, and now declared that we could not do without Irish help. "Let us make it easy for Ireland to assist," was the Minister's cheerful if rather cheap cry.

Perhaps only as a matter of routine the opinion of the man on the spot was invited as to Irish recruiting; he declared that, reluctant as he was to enter into any arena with which he was unfamiliar, it was impossible to disassociate the problem from politics.

"Unless we can get the Irish political parties to be with us in regard to the supply of recruits or men required for the Army, it is in my opinion hopeless to expect that we will get what we want without some form of compulsion.

"The question is therefore up to the Government to decide.

"(1) Whether it is possible to move the political machine so as to induce the Irish Members of Parliament to influence their constituents to come forward in the numbers required, or

"(2) whether it is politically expedient to go to Parliament for power to extend the Compulsory Service Act to Ireland.

"(3) Whether it is possible to get what we want by the Ballot Act.

"I propose to set forth the pros and cons as I understand them after consultation with many who profess a knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the Irish people. These are not my personal opinions.

"It is a question whether it is not too late to resort to compulsion. It might have been done had Parliament included Ireland in the original Bill, or it might have been done had we been ready to do it immediately after the Rebellion. Now it would require a special Act of Parliament with clauses differing from the English Bill, especially in regard to the Tribunals for exemption. These would have to be Military Tribunals which would

not add to the popularity of the measure or lessen the difficulty of getting it passed at Westminster.

“ It would probably take some time before it was got through Parliament, during which time, all over Ireland, a fierce political campaign would be engineered against the measure.

“ There is only an antiquated police force register to work on ; this would have to be declared and passed by Parliament. To make a new register would take time, inflame the suspicions of everyone in Ireland and add to the political unrest.

“ The difference between Ireland and England as regards Compulsory Service is that whilst the former is largely antagonistic, the latter forced the hand of the Government to bring it on.

“ The introduction of Compulsory Service would please the militant Sinn Feiners and the Unionists, the former because it would play into their hands, for it would drive all its opponents into their ranks, and produce unrest ; following the action of the police and military in making arrests there would probably be bloodshed, assaults and other crimes which would enable them to point to this as another example of the gross mismanagement of Irish affairs by the British Government ; it would raise a storm amongst the Irish Americans, and play into German propaganda and intrigue. By the Unionists because they consider what is good enough for England is good enough for Ireland, but the motive imputed to them would be their desire to kill Home Rule.

“ The small uneducated farmer class would be to a man opposed to it, because they would suspect that it was an intrigue to dispossess them of their holdings under the Land Purchase Act. In the west and wilder districts the young men would probably take to the hills and would have to be rounded up by posses of police assisted by soldiers. The police are not sufficiently numerous to undertake a campaign of this sort ; it would therefore fall on the soldiers to do this, making them more unpopular

than they are. The population as a whole would assist the shirkers and retard the action of the police and soldiers, making a difficult task more difficult. Numerous politicians would probably have to be arrested and tried under Defence of the Realm Regulations.

"The introduction of this measure would kill the Constitutional party and weld all sections, including probably Ulster, into one hostile party, whereas at this moment there is no unity amongst the so-called political parties in Ireland. It must be remembered that it was the dread of Compulsory Service that stimulated the Irish Volunteers and the Sinn Fein movement and had some share in leading up to the Rebellion.

"Assuming that it was introduced, we would have perhaps 100,000 Irishmen (not more) discontented and forced into the Army against their will. What would be done with them? If they were drafted into the existing Irish Reserve Battalions which are at the moment contented and loyal, they would probably poison the minds of these, and it would be a matter for grave consideration whether they could be trusted and armed while in Ireland. On the other hand, if they were all, including the Reserve Battalions, sent over to England to be trained and armed, this would at once give rise to the outcry that England does not trust Ireland and that this was an intrigue to get all able-bodied men out of the way in order to kill Home Rule. An alternative would be to send them direct to France to be armed and trained there. They would point to the splendid services of Irishmen, the V.C.'s and D.C.M.'s gained, and say this is the reward for their services to the Empire. The Irish Members of Parliament would take this opportunity for a fierce militant campaign to regain their waning popularity.

"We would have to face a Sinn Fein Ireland, and the arming of these Irish conscripts in Ireland might give the opportunity for a bloody Rebellion on a large scale.

“ On the other hand, Irishmen are wanted for the Irish Regiments and Divisional formations. If sufficient men are not forthcoming, and soon, there is every prospect of these disappearing from attrition.

“ The men are in Ireland and available. Approximately 100,000 could be taken without seriously affecting agricultural or industrial pursuits.

“ If they cannot be got under the voluntary system some sort of compulsion must be resorted to, and the difficulties are not so great as some imagine, that many do not now offer themselves because they do not see why they should and not the rest; also the country is prosperous, the harvest is on, and except in the cities there is no poverty or scarcity of labour.

“ There is no doubt that there are a large number of idle young men of military age who would be usefully employed in the Army to their benefit and the Empire requires them.

“ But if Compulsory Service is brought in we would have to concede considerable latitude in exempting bonâ-fide farm-hands required for the farmers' holdings, only sons and such exemption as may be determined, but as a general policy 'fair play and no favour.'

“ If it can be done, a scheme by which men who have the aptitude and who had served in the War could be offered concessions in the matter of acquiring farm lands after the War: it would be a great inducement and gild the pill of compulsion. The Land Colonization (Ex-Soldiers) Act might be extended to Ireland. That out of the land distributed by the Government throughout Ireland sufficient portion be allocated to men who have served their country in the Navy and Army and who have been discharged with a good character, and that Government and all local authorities spending public money reserve a fair percentage of all vacancies to be filled by such soldiers and sailors.

“ In regard to Recruiting, Wastage and Army requirements,

the total number of men from Ireland from the outbreak of War to 28th August, 1916, is . . . . .	103,760
the total number of men enlisted for Ireland from January, 1916, to 13th August, 1916, is . . . . .	13,240
while the total number dispatched to Irish Units in the Field for the same period is	15,750
For the period January to August the number of recruits that <i>should</i> have been taken in order to maintain Irish Units in the Field is and this figure makes no allowance for contribution to R.F.C., R.A., R.E., Cavalry, A.S.C., etc.	60,000
The present shortage in the three Irish Divisions (Sept. 20) is . . . . .	17,750
The total number of men fit for draft in Reserve Units trained and under training in Ireland is . . . . .	9,520
of which a large proportion are men returned from Expeditionary Forces.	

“ At the present moment, in order to make up the shortage in the divisions and to meet wastage for the next four months the total of 45,000 is required.”

Having set out the gravity of the case, Maxwell urged that the Government should decide quickly how best to meet it. To suggest compulsion without authority or without inciting any preparations for it would be to create suspicion uselessly.

If for the Imperial cause it were necessary to resort to compulsion, he might have to demand at least another division of Infantry to cope with difficulties which might arise. Time was, of course, a consideration ; it would take at least a year before the effect of compulsion could effect the armies in the field—and if compulsion were prescribed and failed, there would be no more voluntary recruits from Ireland. “ If only,” he pleaded, “ political



machinery could be so adjusted that it would enable the Irish Parliamentary party to come out into the open and recruit in their constituencies, Ireland would save her honour and the possibilities of very serious future complications avoided."

The memorandum on Conscription was to be Maxwell's Swan Song as regards Ireland. So far he had heard nothing of any divergence between his views and those of the Government ; so far as he knew his policy had been theirs even if his prescience had been all his own ; but for some time he had been keenly aware that he could not rely on a continuance of their whole-hearted support, and without such support his power for good would be so impaired that the question almost daily recurred to him whether it would be well to forestall the platitudinous letter he was likely to receive by tendering his resignation.

As early as June he had thought that the Government were already " getting cold feet over Martial Law " and were lending a willing ear to the Irish Members. A little later he confided to a friend that he might be " drifting into a wrong position," and as autumn drew on his misgivings were justified alike by the letters he received from various persons, both in and out of office, and by a certain wavering, if not cooling, of opinion which marked the utterances of his protagonists in Parliament. Mr. Duke,<sup>1</sup> who took over the duties of Chief Secretary in

<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR MR. DUKE,

During and immediately after the late Rebellion a number of shot-guns and rifles were collected by the military and police acting under my orders. Some of these were handed in voluntarily by the National Volunteers on the understanding they would be returned. Others were taken from men who stated they were National Volunteers. In some cases the National Volunteers actually assisted the troops against the Sinn Feiners.

Colonel Maurice Moore, C.B., who is the so-called C.-in-C. of the Nationalist Volunteers, is now asking for these arms (rifles) to be returned. Some have been returned to Cork. I have been temporizing until the status of Volunteers in Ireland is settled.

I wrote to you about this to-day.

Ireland in July, probably struck the right nail on the head that the Nationalist party did not positively dislike Maxwell or even consider that he had been too oppressive, but that he stood for Martial Law and all that this means to him. In other words, he must be got rid of not for what he had done—and certainly not for what he had left undone—but because he stood for the vindication of Right.

But Maxwell was essentially one of the Servants of the Crown who hold that the work and not the workman is the matter of supreme importance, and so long as he was clear that he could not say "*consummatum est*" to his work he would not voluntarily lay down his tools. But before October had run out the letter couched in just the terms he might have expected was put in his hands.

MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

As I have endeavoured more than once both publicly and privately to make clear, the Government are greatly indebted to you for the manner in which you have discharged the very difficult and responsible mission that was entrusted to you in Ireland.

The continuation of your work, so well done, can, we feel, now be left to other hands, and I suspect you will not be sorry to be set free for other and perhaps more congenial duties.

The Northern Command in England, which, from the point of view of possible invasion, is of the highest importance, is about to be vacated, and I propose that you

In some cases it is clear enough that there was an undertaking that they should be returned. In others the border-line is so thin that one hesitates.

I personally think that under the existing circumstances there could be no great harm done in returning the rifles claimed by Col. Moore, but I think he should be held personally responsible for them and on no account are they to be used for drill or practice.

The question hangs on the one, i.e. the status of Volunteers in Ireland.

should undertake it. The King will be pleased at the same time in recognition of your eminent services to confer upon you the G.C.B.

Believe me, yours sincerely,  
(Signed) H. H. ASQUITH.

The reply was as simple as it was dignified. The writer was grateful for the terms in which the Prime Minister couched his letter, for the constant support he had received in the last months, as also for the recommendation to the Sovereign. As to the last he would like to receive an assurance that subordinates who had performed no less difficult duties should also be selected for some honour. As regards the Northern Command he could not but remember that, after the high command he had recently held, this appointment would be regarded through any malevolent spectacles as a step downwards and that the post he really coveted and in which he might prove of some value would be the eventual succession to the High Commissionership in Egypt. These considerations apart, he was prepared to go, and go cheerfully, wherever His Majesty's Government thought he might be usefully employed. One small claim he put forward, but put forward in vain : "The announcement of my translation to the Northern Command," he wrote to the Prime Minister on November the 6th, "has now been made public. I would ask for your assistance and support in my retaining the temporary rank of General to which I was gazetted when in Egypt, and so far I know I have not been gazetted as relinquishing it. When I came to Ireland I asked that I should retain this temporary rank, and though the C.G.S. rather demurred nothing was definitely settled, and I considered that I was right in retaining it until the contrary was decided. I am anxious that there should be no suggestion that I have lost rank by being brought away from Ireland, so I trust you will see your way to mention this to the Secretary for War ; it means no extra emolument and officers

junior to me in France and elsewhere have been granted this temporary rank."

The reply from the pen of the Prime Minister's private Secretary was correct if a little chilling.

10, DOWNING STREET.

DEAR SIR JOHN,

Mr. Asquith wishes me to apologize to you for not having written to you before with regard to the request which you made to him that you should be confirmed, whilst in the Northern Command, in the temporary rank of General. You will understand that in the turmoil of the last fortnight it had been difficult to deal with such matters.

Mr. Asquith consulted the Secretary of State<sup>1</sup> as to whether it would be possible to grant your request, and the following reply was given him :

Sir John appears to be under a misapprehension with regard to his position. On vacating his appointment in Egypt, he automatically relinquished his temporary rank of General, and reverted to a Lt.-General on half pay ; when he was appointed in Ireland, he was gazetted in that rank, and was so shown in the Army List. Careful search has been made, but no record can be found that he was allowed to retain the temporary rank of General while in Ireland. There are further points, that it would be difficult to justify the rank for the Northern Command and not give it to the other G.O.'s, C.-in-C., e.g. York and Salisbury ; and the retention of the rank would be made the ground for all officers holding temporary rank to continue in that rank after they had given up the appointment for which it was granted.

I am afraid, therefore, that we cannot, in justice to others, comply with Sir John Maxwell's request.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd George.

## THE NORTHERN COMMAND

“Lieutenant-General Sir John Maxwell, who has just been given a G.C.B. for his services in Ireland, has been transferred to the Northern Command, where a new broom is sorely wanted ; one of his first and most pressing duties will be to infuse some new blood into the recruiting department.”<sup>1</sup> After the strain of Egypt and the stress of Ireland, Maxwell may have felt that at York he had drifted into something like a military backwater, but he needed no journalistic injunction such as this either to stimulate him to secure recruits for the Army and to marshal them for the fighting lines, or to speed up the war activities of the great industrial area in which his command was situated. Public meetings, speeches, the Sovereign’s inspection,<sup>2</sup> Royal tours, correspondence piled up high—and not all of it necessary—filled up the days and were rightfully recognized as part of the machinery required to keep afoot operations in the great theatre of war where the chief parts were now being played by British soldiers. Maxwell held this office, the last military office to which he would be appointed, for

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a daily journal.

<sup>2</sup>

ROYAL TRAIN.

*May 20th, 1919.*

MY DEAR GENERAL,

The King desires me to express his entire satisfaction with the Military arrangements at Sheffield to-day.

Nothing could have been better than the efficient manner with which the details of the Investiture and March Past have been planned and carried out.

His Majesty is very sorry to think that this may be the last occasion on which you will take part in these functions in the Northern Command, all of which have been attended with such conspicuous success under your auspices.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) CLIVE WIGRAM.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL THE RIGHT HON. SIR JOHN MAXWELL,  
G.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O.

two years, working here in comparative shadow, no less patiently and cheerfully than in the places where he had constantly caught the public eye ; and when in November, 1918, the " Cease Fire " sounded and an exhausted world could rest on its arms, there was no soldier, from Field-Marshal to last-joined drummer, who could grudge his being raised to the rank of full General.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE MILNER MISSION

“ AS regards *Egypt* and the troops the Queen will not give her consent to their *withdrawal* from *Egypt*, as the interests of *Egypt* as well of this country require their remaining. She believes many, if not most, of his colleagues will agree with this, but she fears Mr. Gladstone and Lord Hartington are inclined to be *weak* upon it. The Egyptians cannot govern themselves, that *everyone says* who is not *inclined* to yield to the *cry* of *non-interference* in *everything*. They must be met by an *honest* firm answer that it is impossible to say *when* the British troops *can* go in the interests of *Egypt* and this country.”<sup>1</sup> Queen Victoria’s dictum may be a little awkwardly constructed, but it certainly represented the “honest” opinion of anyone whose thoughts were turned Egyptwards between the rebellion of Arabi in 1882 and the proclamation of the Protectorate in 1914. To the historian it must be left to decide how far the circumstances of the Great War affected, or altered, the relations between Egypt and the country to whom for over 30 years Egypt had owed her peace and prosperity, or in what degree the unrest in the Near East was due to such events as the defeat of Russia by Japan and the retirement of European troops in the face of a Turkish force.

Early in November, 1918, just when the forces of Germany were being beaten to their knees and the fair lands of France were being freed from a brutal invasion, an Anglo-French declaration was put out which benevolently

<sup>1</sup> Queen Victoria to Lord Granville, March, 1883.

announced the enfranchisement of the peoples newly liberated from Turkish oppression ; these happy folk were to enjoy a system of National Government with its authority derived from their own free choice and election.

The High Commissioner <sup>1</sup> lost not a moment in advising the Foreign Office that the policy so boldly and clearly outlined was sure to provoke bitter comment in Egypt, where deep feelings had already been stirred by the establishment of an independent Kingdom in Arabia, a country which every educated Egyptian regarded as being far less developed and up to date than his own. On the 13th November the High Commissioner received a visit from the Prime Minister, with whom he was on the friendliest terms ; Rushdi Pasha proposed that he and the Minister for Education, Adli Pasha, should proceed to England and discuss Egyptian affairs in Downing Street. Their reason was obvious. Two days earlier the Armistice had been signed, and both the Sultan and the Ministers were anxious that the legitimate desires and aspirations of Egypt should be clearly voiced before the assembly of a Peace Conference convened to determine the fate of nations affected by the War. The visit of Rushdi had been preceded the same morning by one from Zaghlul Pasha, who expressed the same wish to visit London with two other leaders of the advanced Nationalist party, his avowed object being to put forward a programme of complete autonomy for Egypt.

Sir Reginald Wingate forwarded both requests with an earnest recommendation that the proposal of the Ministers should be forthwith accepted. The reply that no useful purpose could be served by allowing Nationalist leaders to come to London was wholly reasonable if a little roughly worded ; the excuse for "deferring" the visit of the Ministers was as flimsy as it was unfortunate. A Foreign Secretary a little more sympathetic, if a good deal less efficient, than Mr. Balfour <sup>2</sup> would have recognized how arguable was the desire to state immediately the case for

<sup>1</sup> Sir Reginald Wingate.

<sup>2</sup> Created Earl Balfour, 1922.



Egypt and would have sent a more sympathetic reply than that owing to his absence, and that of other Ministers, in Paris, he would not be able "to devote sufficient time and attention to problems of Egyptian internal reform."

Rushdi read the message with curled lip ; he read into it that His Majesty's Government widely differed from himself in their interpretation of the Protectorate, and he promptly resigned. Every effort was made to induce him to reconsider his resignation, and a prospective date for his visit was hurriedly indicated ; but the harm was done and the Nationalist feeling manifested itself so rapidly and unmistakably that the Ministers would now only agree to confer at the Foreign Office if permission to visit England were equally extended to Zaghlul. This being of course out of the question, the Foreign Minister stepped from the frying-pan into the fire by summoning the High Commissioner to London and thus removing from his post at a moment of critical danger the one man held in esteem, and affection, by every reputable Egyptian and to whom all that Egypt stood for was as the alphabet to a school-boy.

As an unhappy consequence many members of the Moderate party threw in their lot with the advanced Nationalists and an anti-English campaign was quickly raging which was the more inopportune in the absence of many British officials who were still standing to arms. With the New Year a *soi-disant* Delegation constituted itself under the Chairmanship of Zaghlul, addressed the foreign representatives and residents in Cairo as to Egyptian aspirations, and in the first week of March handed to the Sultan a petition which was uncommonly like a blackmailing attempt to prevent him from forming a new Government. It was high time to deport Zaghlul to Malta, but within a week of this being done, an anti-English and indeed anti-European movement had assumed grave proportions ; rioting, looting, bloodshed, and murderous attacks on British soldiers were the order of the day, until even the Delegation took alarm at a state

of affairs which had quickly passed out of their hands into those of irresponsible extremists fed by undesirable aliens. The Commander-in-Chief in Egypt, Lord Allenby, hurried back from Paris where he was attending the Peace Conference, and instituted military measures which produced an apparent calm ; but under instructions from the Home Government he removed the embargo on Egyptians wishing to travel, and the sanction carried with it the return from Malta of Zaghlul and his three associates, who, within a month of their banishment, were free to return to Egypt or to roam Europe with their malicious gospel.

It is within just surmise that if Wingate's advice—urged both from Cairo and orally in Downing Street—had been followed, and not flouted, a rather shameful story need not have been written. The release of the Nationalist leader after serious disturbances had taken place suggested that British policy was flexible and that British statesmen might "set their face," but like a pudding rather than a flint. Punitive proceedings for the murder of British officers and other outrages further exacerbated inflamed feelings, and although a belated attempt at conciliation was made by transferring a large number of trials to the ordinary tribunals, Nationalist opinion was so soured that evidence against the culprit was always withheld and an acquittal had almost always to be registered.

Meanwhile Zaghlul, having failed to get a hearing at the Paris Conference, devoted himself to enlisting foreign support for his cause and even despatched an emissary to stir up feeling in the United States, while his adherents in Egypt worked by day and night to complete their organization and equip it with funds ; their propaganda dwelt on the existing conditions of unrest and provoked a series of ugly strikes.

The British Government now announced that a Special Mission was about to proceed to Egypt, but the agitators made up their own minds and the minds of as many others as possible, that the object of the Mission would be to

extinguish Egyptian nationality and did everything possible to render the activities of the Mission nugatory by organizing a determined boycott.

The Special Mission to Egypt was thus composed :

Lord Milner (Chairman), Sir Rennell Rodd, Sir John Maxwell, Brigadier-General Owen Thomas, Sir Cecil Hurst and Mr. J. A. Spender.<sup>1</sup>

An exclusion of Maxwell from a Mission to probe Egyptian conditions and, if possible, to heal Egyptian feelings, would have been unthinkable ; Sir Rennell Rodd's masterly and yet kindly diplomacy was sure to be employed to highest advantage : the other members were men of marked ability if without any special knowledge of the subject in hand ; the Chairman's experience of Egypt was in the rather remote past and his acute sense of justice might need to be tempered by the advice of the man who would be working with heart as well as brain. Partly owing to the change of Ministry in Egypt, partly to the demon of delay who always attaches himself to Royal, and other, Commissions, the envoys did not set out till the end of November, to reach Cairo on the 7th December. The Sultan <sup>2</sup> expressed himself to Milner at an informal interview, and to the Mission at a more ceremonious audience in the friendliest terms ; he discussed openly the events of the past years and admitted the difficulty of the whole position—due, in some degree, to his personal unpopularity—but declined to give any advice further than a word of warning as to forming rapid conclusions or lending too willing an ear to the effusions of busybodies ; the Sultan's attitude during the stay of the Englishmen was one of courteous, but studied, reserve.

The hostility which the Mission at the outset enjoyed may be gauged by their receiving 1,131 messages of

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Spender, by special permission of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, was allowed to travel to Egypt with the Mission ; Maxwell declined to ask for, or avail himself of, any official facilities for his own wife's journey.

<sup>2</sup> Fuad, brother to Hussein.

protest, threat and ill-will as against 29 telegrams of welcome, the latter mostly from personal acquaintances. The Egyptian Press was almost unanimously insulting in tone and text and declared that any recognition of the Mission would argue a cowardly acceptance of existing conditions in Egypt, and that any Egyptian who had any dealings with any one of the members would be guilty of treason. Zaghlul Pasha was pointed to as the accredited representative of the Egyptian people and the Mission was advised to address any remarks to him. Lawyers, students, tramwaymen, cab-drivers and shopkeepers went on short strike, processions paraded the streets with banners denouncing the Mission generally and Milner particularly, and shouting for Zaghlul Pasha and "the complete independence of Egypt"; even the Cairene ladies, to mark their sense of the occasion, emerged from their seclusion and drove through the streets with similar war-cries. The wonder was—and the wonder was due to the police with occasional military support—that there was so little destruction of property and no effusion of blood; beyond the wrecking of a few tramcars little material damage was done, and within a week disorder began to subside and Maxwell could write: "Outwardly all seems to go on as usual. There are occasional demonstrations and 'down with Milner' is the popular cry. But on the whole I think the opposition is breaking down, and once the ice breaks the thaw will be rapid. So far we have been boycotted; those who would desire to come forward dare not do so—they are all terrorized by the students. Sultan Fuad seems to be very unpopular with all; but having been put there by us, the Residency supports him through thick and thin. Politically this is quite right, but not where he is vindictive, and he seems to be so to all the members of his family. Of course there are wheels within wheels, etc., but if he really wishes to be popular, and I believe he does, I don't think it politic of him to quarrel with his relations. Neither Izzet nor Formi are to be allowed back. The price of cotton is

fabulous and everyone full of money. Perhaps there is too much of it here."

The strength of the popular current was perhaps shown less in the noisy demonstrations in the street than in the manifesto addressed by the heads of the El Azhar University, the centre of Mohammedan religious teaching, and in a declaration, signed by six princes of the family of Mohammed Ali, embodied in a letter to Lord Milner and simultaneously published in the Press. The University, in pompous phrase, set out the claims of Egypt to complete independence and demanded a wholesale British withdrawal ; the output of the princes was probably due to their desire to gain popularity by identifying themselves with a movement which certainly appeared to be sweeping the country.

The immediate desire of the leaders of this movement was to prevent the members of the Mission from coming into friendly touch with representative Egyptians who would inform them whether the demand for complete independence was really substantial and how far the denunciations of the Protectorate were real or "got up."

"We have not yet broken the ice," Maxwell noted on the 19th December, "and the boycott is still on. Public opinion is terrorized by these silly students and school-boys ; all Egyptians have an obsession that they cannot accept the word 'Protectorate.' Its Arabic equivalent is apparently offensive. They have set up the counter-cry of complete independence, which is ridiculous, and they know it, but they won't have 'Protectorate.' The attempt to kill the Prime Minister was a poor affair. The young gentleman who did it was armed with two very indifferently-made Italian bombs, both of which he threw, two Browning pistols and a tablet of cyanide of potassium for himself, which he forgot to take. No harm was done. The Prime Minister, a Copt, took it very well and has gone up in the estimation of the world. They will probably have another crack at him. Fuad is hated by everyone. He has no influence, and the more one dips into things,

the more apparent is the tragedy of Hussein's death. It was a calamity for Egypt." And a few days later : " The situation is characteristic of the Egyptians and would be understandable if there were any chance of success, but one cannot understand why the majority of the people are afraid of a noisy, talkative minority. Yet Egypt has never been so well off : the cotton crop has left them enormously rich, and except for all this sentimental nonsense, they have very little to complain of. Certain grievances in regard to the Government can be easily adjusted, and given a good Sultan and more sympathetic officials there would be little or no trouble."

No question of the Sudan was to be allowed into the Report : the status of Egypt might be still indeterminable, but the status of the Sudan had been clearly defined by the Anglo-Egyptian Convention of 1904 and admitted of no review. Maxwell, however—accompanied by Sir Owen Thomas—was asked to pay a visit to Khartoum and check all the evidence as to existing conditions which had been furnished by British and native residents in the country.

This mission within a Mission was wholly to his liking, as well as within his competence ; his familiarity with the circumstances, past and present, of the Sudan caused the notes which he provided to be models of clarity—and brevity—and fortified Milner to remind Adli, when eventually handing him the Memorandum, that " no change in the political status of Egypt should be allowed to disturb the development of the Sudan on a system which has been productive of such good results."

The journey down-stream had not to be hurried, and a few days of comparative leisure could be spent at his most favoured place, Luxor. " I am hoping," he wrote thence, " that you have not sent out the proofs of the book,<sup>1</sup> trusting that you have seen in the papers that we are all coming home. I expect to be at home the first week in April. We did not succeed in breaking up the senile decay in Egyptian minds, they all loudly proclaimed the boycott

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Kitchener.*

and all fervently wished it would come to an end. It is difficult to deal with an intensely patriotic people who one and all desire complete independence not knowing quite what they mean, with no political programme and an inward feeling that they are lost if Great Britain takes them literally at their word. They are intensely foolish and are perhaps missing a great chance. We on our side are not free from fault, we have muddled along and when the great War Octopus came along, it fairly throttled a simple innocent bureaucratic government and it broke down badly under the pressure. Even the sagacity of a Wingate availed not at all ! Meanwhile, we hear that the great patriot Saad Zaghlul has enlarged his harems and is unfortunate at Poker in Paris. The faithful over here are apparently quite happy and ready to renew the funds necessary for such diplomatic actions. For this they get a high-falutin telegram occasionally applauding their crass stupidity and assuring them that their efficacious boycott of Milner has won for them the admiration of the whole world. Milner has flown to Palestine. We are here and have really found the Sun at last, Spender has broken some ribs at Sakkara, the rest have gone home. We have done some work here and will give back to Egypt a report some time in April. I see Asquith had a tremendous ovation on taking his seat ! I somehow think Ll. G. has outstayed his welcome."

The members of the Mission travelled home by different routes and about the middle of April met to draw up their Report ; they had scarcely composed the preamble when the news came that, largely owing to Adli Pasha's representations, Zaghlul was prepared to treat directly with them and would come to London early in June for that purpose. The "conversations" which ensued, and which lasted till mid-August, had for a common denominator a treaty between Great Britain and Egypt ; the terms of the document were to be argued backwards and forwards—and too often backwards—through long sittings on hot summer days.

The Egyptians were acutely sensitive as to whether any of the safeguards—essential for international interests—might not be considered as contradictory to the ideal of independence ; and compromise after compromise had to be suggested, adopted or set aside. But eventually the outlines of a settlement were sketched and it remained to receive from Zaghlul and his associates an assurance that they would put all their weight into securing its acceptance by the Egyptian people and that in due course they would induce an Egyptian Popular Assembly to ratify a Treaty which would render it effective. Here Zaghlul demurred; he was by no means sure that what he would agree to himself might not be looked at askance by the more fervent of his followers ; his popularity was what he prized most and he was not going to risk it. He suggested further concessions on our part and for the consideration of these made special appeal to Maxwell's affection for, and long association with, Egypt. But there came the quick reminder that British opinion had also to be taken into account and that it would be worse than useless to yield a point for the sake of pleasing the Egyptians if the point yielded would prevent Great Britain from endorsing the scheme. But when things were looking a little grey, the bright idea occurred to Zaghlul that discussions might be suspended while a couple of the Delegation should hurry to Egypt, explain what was in the minds of the Mission, and dilate on the advantages which Egypt would suck from the proposed settlement. If a favourable ear were turned to the British proposals the Delegation might well, on the return of the emissaries, consider they had a mandate to give to these their wholehearted support.

Both parties smiled on the idea ; for both it had obvious advantages. A memorandum, loosely called the Milner-Zaghlul agreement, was drawn up and put into the hands of Adli Pasha, who had faultlessly rendered his part of benevolent intermediary, to be communicated to Zaghlul and his friends and to be freely used by them for discussion in Egypt. The main idea was at once to assert Egyptian



independence, to define the positions between Egypt and England, and incidentally to modify the capitulatory powers enjoyed by other countries so as to render them less irritating to Egyptian susceptibilities and less injurious to Egyptian pride. The main safeguard stood that Great Britain was to reserve the right of maintaining a military force for the protection of its Imperial communications, Zaghlul's face being saved by the proviso that this was "not to constitute a military occupation or prejudice the rights of the Government of Egypt." The main concession which resulted from the London conversations was that Egypt in her dealings with foreign countries should have not only consular but full diplomatic status. This at once healed a spot the soreness of which at the time Maxwell had vainly sought to soothe when under the provisions of the Protectorate the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs had been dispensed with and his indispensable office placed under the High Commissioner. The Mission while in Egypt had been quick to see that Egyptians, from the Sultan downwards, were, however their views varied, solid on this point. To deny diplomatic status to the representatives of Egypt—so Zaghlul, day in, day out, protested—would be to vitiate that intimate alliance between England and Egypt which it was sought to set up, and in virtue of which alone peace and justice would lie. "The concession," Maxwell wrote afterwards to a friend, "was a matter of common sense rather than of opportunism." Apart from the fact that it was a *sine qua non*, Egyptian diplomatists could do nothing injurious to England without a breach of the treaty and, if satisfied with their position, would disfavour any intrigue likely to sow mischief between England and Egypt, and thus give some foreign Power an opportunity of butting in.

The party of four detailed by Zaghlul proceeded to Egypt and, early attempts at opposition having been stifled, on the 16th April at a meeting of the Legislative Assembly, secured by a large majority a vote in favour of

the proposals submitted. The emissaries rejoined Zaghlul in Paris and the whole delegation, with the indefatigable Adli, returned to London for the final pourparlers which proceeded on smooth lines, Zaghlul only "hedging" to the point of insisting that difficulty was sure to wait on any settlement so long as the Protectorate was in force.

On December 9th the Report of the Milner Mission was handed to the Imperial Government. The Memorandum it embodied proposed that the independence of Egypt as a Constitutional Monarchy should be recognized by Great Britain and that Egypt should enjoy the right of representation in foreign countries; the rights hitherto exercised under the system of capitulations were to be transferred to Great Britain, and in view of the special relations between the two countries created by the alliance, the British representative was to enjoy "an exceptional position" in Egypt and precedence over all other representatives; an Egyptian Constituent Assembly was to be called and Great Britain was to sponsor Egypt's candidature as a member of the League of Nations. And, as an echo of Queen Victoria's letter, stress was laid on Great Britain's unassailable right to keep soldiers on Egyptian soil, if not to keep order, anyhow to be a *point d'appui* in the chain of Great Britain's defences, linking East and West.

To the Report itself Maxwell was not a signatory, but in a Note attached to it, under date 4th November, he explained that, owing to ill-health, he was obliged to proceed abroad and could take no part in the final deliberations of the Mission, but that, up to then, he was entirely in accord with his colleagues as with the policy outlined in the proposal of agreement handed to Zaghlul in August.

This declaration was certainly made without any reserve, and there exists no evidence that Maxwell differed at any time, on any point, from the other Commissioners. But subsequent remarks which fell from his lips left the

impression of his having strenuously urged that the fullest measure of generosity compatible with British security should be extended to Egyptian aspirations, and this in consideration of the mental and intellectual progress which, generally speaking, the Egyptian had made in the last thirty years. He could not dismiss from his mind that in theory Egypt, until the declaration of the Protectorate, had been an autonomous nationality under the suzerainty of the Sultan of Turkey ; nor could he forget—however impracticable the removal of an armed force from Cairo and the Canal—that high hopes had been raised as early as 1897 when an important Servant of the Crown had been sent to Constantinople to prepare the way for the evacuation of British troops so soon as there was a reasonable certainty that order would be maintained and the lives and properties of residents and foreigners rendered secure.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### KITCHENER SCHOLARS

IF the Milner Mission was the last of Maxwell's official duties, he had by no means wound up the business of his busy days. His active interest in Egyptian politics, in the prosperity of the country, in its army and the development of its commerce, would furnish him with occupations which, when he was in fair health, suffered no day to drag. Over and over again requests would come from Egypt for his advocacy and advice ; again and again men, some of whom only enjoyed a slight acquaintance with him, from every corner of the Empire would consult him as to their troubles and their hopes ; to none was a deaf ear turned, and the term " disabled soldier " made unflinching appeal to his heart and not seldom undue appeal to his purse.

At first as the close friend of Lord Carnarvon, and then an executor of his will, Maxwell's old keenness in Egyptian archæology was revived and sharpened anew ; through his hands passed the threads of the famous discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb and of the controversy which later attached to it. Into this subject he threw himself with all the determination—sometimes rather dangerously nearing obstinacy—which he would bring to bear on any point when he believed his convictions to be solidly grounded, and his outpourings, alike in private conversation and public press, were largely influenced by a sense of loyalty to a friend who had always loyally stood by him.

The last labour which he undertook was a labour of sheer love, and the labourer, if a little weary with a long

day's work, brought to it all that he could give of thought and care.

The British public had poured out money in memory of the great Englishman whom Maxwell had revered as a leader and loved as a friend ; he was forward to urge that the income of the Fund, amounting to something under half a million sterling, should be spent in the way Kitchener would most have liked. Largely owing to Sir John's advice it was decided, early in 1919 by a Committee, over which the Queen Mother presided, that the main object of the Fund should be to provide scholarships for the sons of officers and men with wide interpretation but with special reference to commerce, industry and science. A Royal Charter was quickly obtained, and within the first year over 80 scholarships were awarded ; ten years later a thousand young men, proudly bearing the label of Kitchener Scholars, were engaged in almost every walk of life, and thenceforward the Society was to move on with steady strides and month by month to increase in value and volume.

Under Maxwell's Chairmanship every candidate would be interviewed by a Committee of educational experts who gave evidence as to character, circumstances, special abilities and promise of proficiency in the future. No other engagement, no wind or weather, nor later even failing health, could prevent the Chairman from presiding at these interviews, where he would record a well-balanced, but always generous, judgment as to the merits of the youthful applicants. " I wish I had a boy of my own," was the lament which, even in his feverishly busy noon-day, was sometimes allowed to escape him. Now it would seem as if in the evening of life he had more " boys of his own " than he could count whose successes he would mark with eager satisfaction, whose disappointments would excite his quick and practical sympathy. From the day they came before him until his own last day there were few Kitchener Scholars—however far-flung their careers—of whom he altogether lost sight ; there would not be one



GENERAL SIR JOHN MAXWELL AS COLONEL OF THE  
BLACK WATCH



who did not feel that he could turn to "Sir John" at any moment, or in any difficulty, for advice and help and encouragement;—and the rapturous greeting he would receive at the yearly dinners of the Association was in warmth and sincerity no whit behind what had often been his experience "in the old Cairo days."

Health was a talent with which Maxwell had perhaps been apt to over-trade, and the earliest sign of this coincided with the latest discharge of public duty. Without going so far as the peer who made it a rule "to allow no doctor to interfere with his diet," Sir John was not always sufficiently careful as to what was "good for him" and at one time, while incurring considerable fatigue, would substitute excessive cigarette-smoking for sufficient food. The first breakdown occurred towards the close of 1920 during the session in London of the Milner Committee; he was sharply attacked by bronchitis and the doctors straitly ordered him to pass the rest of the winter in Egypt. There was an apparent, but only an apparent, recovery to complete health; the illness had strained the valves of his heart, and though nothing could quench a cheerful spirit or cause chronic good-humour to evaporate, though his keen and shrewd interest in men and matters never flagged for a moment, Maxwell, in his latter years, was, on and off, a sick man. The work which came to his hand, though it was no longer the service of the State, had to be, and was, done, but time and again it would seem as if a whole mountain of fatigue, increasing with every moment in weight, were laid on him. He hungered for the sun, and as the English summers were not always too kind, the time to leave for Egypt was eagerly anticipated. One winter was spent in California, but, except for the pleasure of seeing, on his way there and back, his grandchildren and his daughter—now married to a distinguished citizen of New York,—the experience was not considered a success,



and the Egypt habit was resumed, Assuan being the most favoured spot.

With the December of 1928 it was decided that South Africa should be given a trial ; however tedious his former job there, Maxwell was reminded that he had never felt so well as in Pretoria ; there was a delightful hotel at Hout Bay, reported to be a real sun-trap, with the breezes blowing straight on to it from the sea, and the prospect was altogether alluring. A family dinner-party was arranged for Christmas night, and then Maxwell and his wife would set sail ; but as the time for taking ship drew near, there was an obvious reluctance to leave England. The invalid felt more tired than usual, he was altogether " out of sorts," he was not sure if his private affairs were quite in order ; on the other hand, he was comfortable in his new house in South Kensington and, in a word, he wanted to remain at home. But medical advice prevailed and for a while after landing in South Africa any forebodings seemed unjustified, and a sense of enjoyment entirely reasserted itself. The weather was beautiful, the circumstances were comfortable, the Governor-General, Lord Athlone, and his Royal Consort, were kindness itself, and the hospitality of Government House was delightful. Then the unfortunate occurred. The old love of a race-course drew him to a meeting and, with evening drawing on, he caught a chill as he motored back to the hotel. The chill developed into pneumonia, great difficulty of breathing supervened, and it was thought well to take the patient in an ambulance to Cape Town so that he might enjoy all the resources of medical skill. But the last stage on the road of life was to be very short and not too difficult ; there was a gradual weakening of body rather than of mind, a rally which could deceive no one, a few hours of complete consciousness and, his hand tightly clasped in the hand of his wife, a tired soldier sank quietly to sleep.

With reverent care the body was borne across the seas to England to rest for a few days, under the presence of the Holy Sacrament, in the War Memorial Chapel of St.

Matthew's, Westminster. There followed a service of hymn and prayer at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, where the Sovereign was represented and where officers, soldiers and friends of every class and profession crowded to pay their tribute to one who had never swerved in his friendships nor failed a friend. A day later the doors of the Crypt in York Minster were opened to admit the entrance of a little casket ; within six months the wife who, whatever her absences, had never been far from his thoughts had gone to join him in the Silent Land ; and so, dust to dust, husband and wife sleep the Great Sleep together.

" All your history points to men who have done their best according to their lights and to whom full justice is not done until long after they themselves have passed away."

So mused one of the wisest of our great Pro-Consuls on whom political judgment had alternately smiled and frowned ; there may be an implication of gentle reproach in the thought, yet an Englishman who has freely spent himself in the service of his country may be well content for posterity to assign him his place, however subordinate, in the gallery of faithful Servants of the Crown. And those who lived near to, and loved, a truly lovable soul may remember that there are men—and John Grenfell Maxwell was surely one of them—so buoyant in character, so quick in sympathy, so eager in effort, that Death, whenever and in whatever guise it comes, far from suggesting any abrupt term to beneficent activities only seems to point to further employment in the wide fields which lie a little out of sight.

## EPILOGUE

BY MRS. CLIFFORD CARVER

SOME time after the death of my father, Sir John Maxwell, while I was sorting his various letters and papers, it occurred to me that somehow a record of his life should be kept for his grandchildren and the many friends who knew and loved him.

Sir George Arthur, who was one of his oldest friends and associates, and the author of several well-known biographies, was suggested as being exceptionally qualified for this undertaking. It was no easy task, and I feel most grateful to Sir George for his kindness and the ability he has displayed in presenting to the public such an admirable character study of Sir John as a British Army Officer of the old school, a man of action, an untiring worker, an excellent administrator, and a good soldier. My mother, who died so soon after him, was the one who could and should have written this epilogue to his "Life," as she was his constant companion on his travels and during many of his campaigns. She could have given the personal touch, and by her close association with his life have filled in the many gaps which of necessity occur in the letters and diaries we found at his death. She could by her reminiscences have supplied the lighter touch to this rather stern picture of his life. Unfortunately, owing to his frequent absences abroad, I saw very little of my parents, and was not able to be of much help in supplying any anecdotes of his family life.

I can vaguely remember as a small child being perfectly terrified of this tall bronzed stranger I was expected to

recognize as my father !—but after I had overcome my fears and had got to know him better I begged him to bring me back a black baby for my very own. This he promised faithfully to do, and on his next “leave” solemnly presented me with a Golliwog, which so frightened me I burst into tears and refused to be comforted ! It seems strange on looking back to think how seldom I saw him and how little I knew him.

I knew him best towards the end of his career, when in his public life he met with so much misunderstanding and with many disappointments. While at home, he was constantly harassed and worried owing to my mother’s serious ill-health ; but never once during all these anxious times did he become embittered or impatient ; he remained as he had always been—a most lovable person, a true friend, and one of the most patient and even-tempered men I have ever known.

I was with him in Ireland when he was Commander-in-Chief during the Rebellion of ’16, and saw him at work there on a most ungrateful task, which he heartily hated but which he undertook without a backward glance, and with all the ability he was able to command. He was faced with a formidable problem in which he had to appear as a cold-hearted tyrant, whereas he was in reality one of the kindest and most tender-hearted of men. It cost him hours of agony to sign the death-warrants of the Rebel Irish leaders, but no matter how much it cost him or how great his distaste for the work he had in hand he was never one to flinch from what he believed to be his duty. What must his feelings have been at a later date when his case was solemnly tried to determine whether he had acted lawfully in condemning these men to death by Martial Law or whether they had been murdered ?

The happiest part of his life was in Egypt, where he spent nearly thirty years of his military life and where he was both loved and understood. His knowledge of Egypt and his personal friendships among the Egyptians themselves, combined with his unfailing justice and sense of

humour, had made him the friend and adviser of both great and small, and gave him a prestige of much value to his Government. During August, 1914, when he was Chief British Liaison Officer on Joffre's Staff, he was sent by Lord Kitchener to organize the defence of Egypt, and it fell to his lot to guide the Egyptian people through a very critical period in their history, and under his firm but kind administration the dread of Martial Law was to some extent lessened and much bitterness against the British Government dispelled. He felt very bitterly that with all the years of his service in Egypt, he was not allowed to finish the work he had so ably begun—but he was never given to brooding or recriminations.

In later years, when he had retired from active service and, owing to the condition of his heart, was obliged to lead a very quiet and sedentary life, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of the Egyptian Exploration Society, of which he became President. During those years his "Collection," which he had started in Egypt many years previously (adding to it from time to time), eventually became an absorbing hobby. He shared with his friends Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter their delight and enthusiasm over the discovery and excavation at the Tomb of Tutankhamen, and many were the hours he spent at "Highclere" with these two friends discussing their wonderful finds and sharing their hopes and plans for the future working of that historic enterprise.

After the death of Lord Carnarvon, which occurred so tragically at the height of the excitement over his wonderful discovery, Sir John, as an executor of the Carnarvon Estate and in co-operation with the British Museum, tried in vain to preserve the Collection for the British people, and was bitterly disappointed when, owing to lack of funds, it was sold to the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Up to the last few years of his life he had been so occupied with his work that he had had but little time for play, and although he was devoted to his family he scarcely

ever saw them, owing to the fact that he was so often stationed abroad—but he was a great letter-writer and kept up a lively correspondence with us all, even with his small grandsons, especially with Jack, the eldest, who had been named for him and to whom he seemed particularly devoted. He spent hours filling innumerable scrapbooks with clippings and photographs for his grandsons, using the utmost precision and order—a record of his career at work and at play which they may well be proud to own.

The spell of Egypt was still upon him, and although he could no longer take any active part in Egyptian affairs, the Egyptians were still very dear to his heart, and many knotty points and delicate situations were discussed in his presence and settled in his home.

In spite of his ill-health, however, he spent much time these last few years in travel, and as the cold English winters did not agree with him or with my mother, they wandered from Egypt to the United States, where they spent a few happy weeks, and from there to the Riviera, and finally to South Africa in search of health and sunshine. But the long trip to South Africa was to prove fatal to them both, as it was there that he contracted the cold which so soon turned to pneumonia and caused his death within a few days—so far away from all he knew and loved.

PHILÆ CARVER.

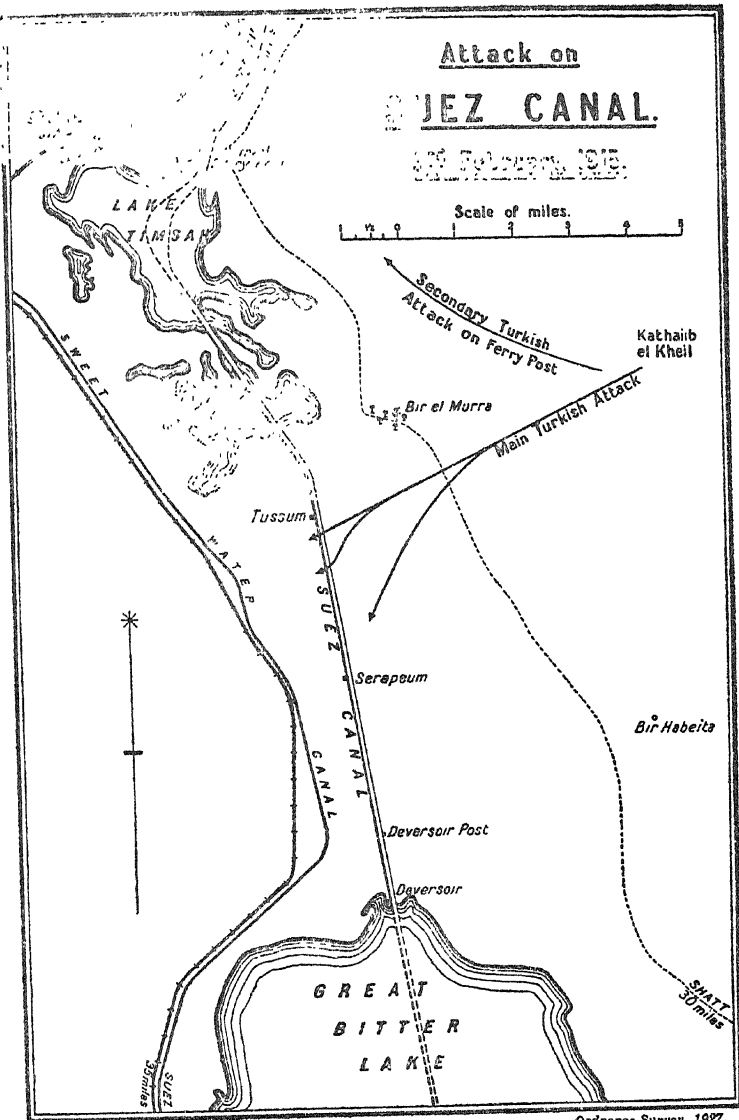
NEW YORK,  
*April, 1932.*



# Attack on SUEZ CANAL.

22 February 1915.

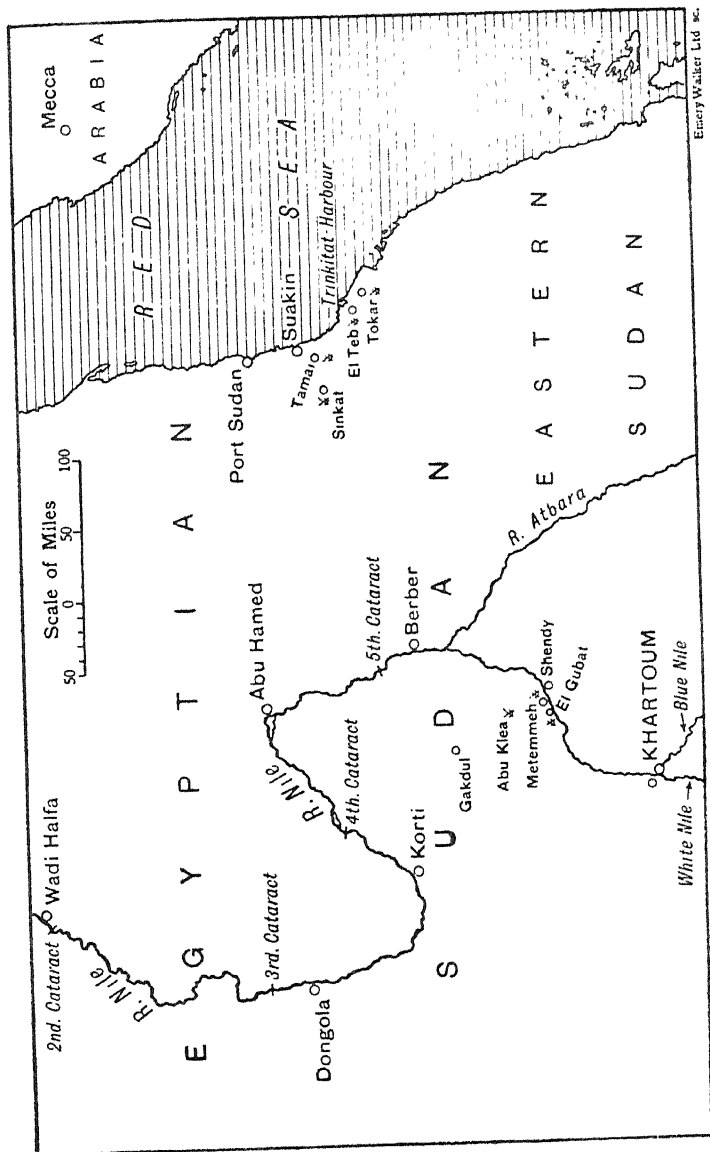
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